

Call Manual for Congregations and Institutions

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INTRODUCTION

Article 5 of the Augsburg Confession tells us that God has instituted the Office of Ministry in order that the Holy Spirit might work faith in us through God's Word and Sacraments. Article 14 states that no one should preach or administer the sacraments without being "regularly called."

It is the intent of this manual to provide guidance for rostered leaders and congregations concerning the process of identifying a "regularly called" rostered leader.

The time in-between call is a period of significant change for both leader and congregation, offering exciting and challenging opportunities for self-reflection, new visioning, and renewal of ministry. It also offers a chance to find new ways to love, care for and serve our neighbor.

The detailed process of calling of a rostered leader poses many challenges and requirements that are designed to lead congregations and leaders through prayerful discernment and deep introspection in order to bring them, at last, to self-discovery and greater awareness of their gifts and needs.

This manual seeks to clarify the process for congregations and institutions and explain how we provide for both the mobility of pastors and other rostered leaders and the staffing of congregations. Throughout the process we need to be constant in prayer, inviting God's Holy Spirit to guide and lead our every step and trusting that the Spirit works through the process to call rostered leaders to specific ministries in the Church.

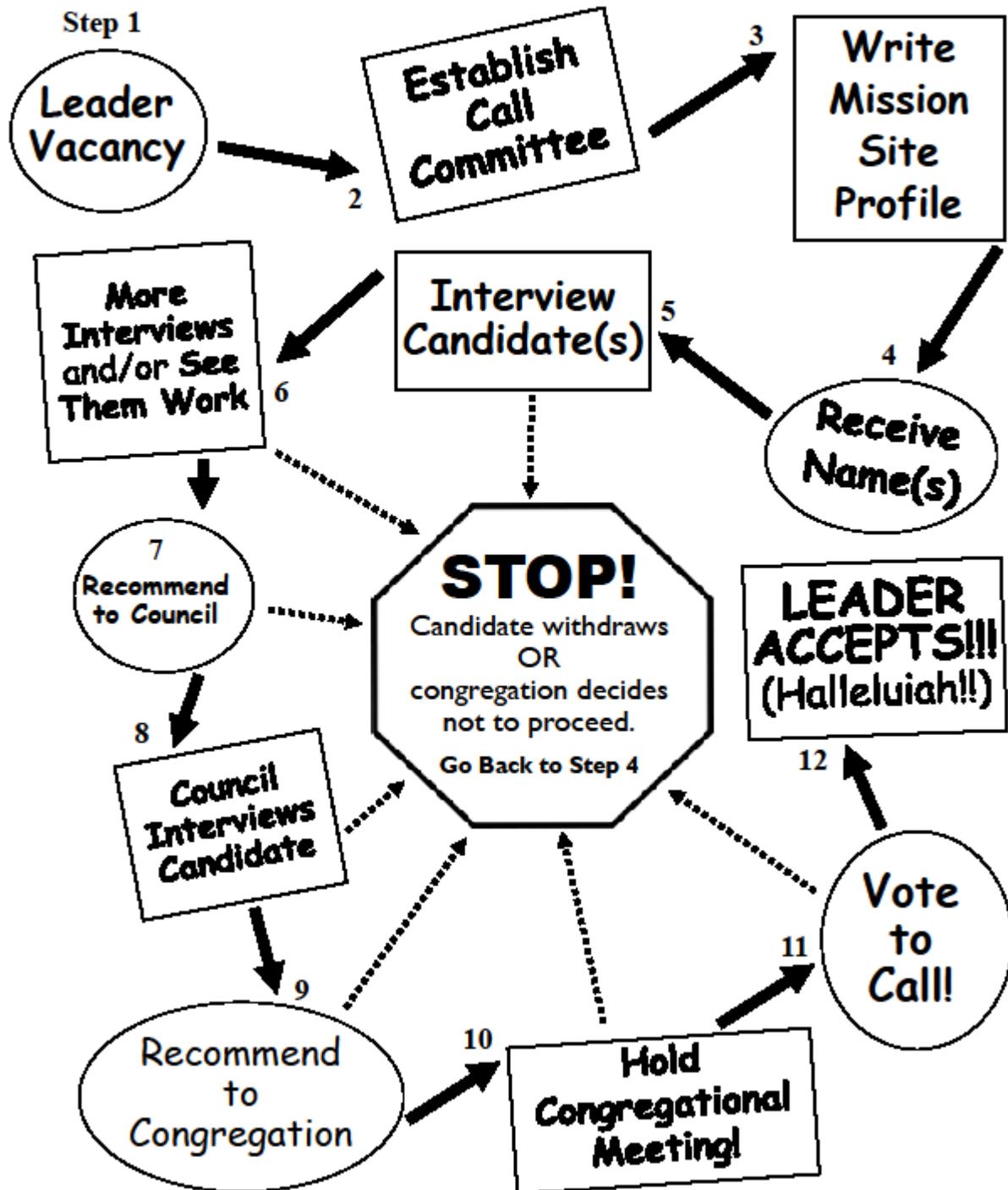
A PRAYER

Heavenly Father, our future is not yet known. Help us see which way we should go and whom you will send to us as pastor (or associate in ministry/ deaconess/diaconal minister). Your presence is needed very much. Help all of us involved in this change to look for the light of your Son, Jesus the Christ, that the way becomes clear and your will is done. Amen.

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12 Steps to Your New Leader!



12 STEPS TO CALLING YOUR NEW ROSTERED LEADER

Think of the chart on the preceding page as a map guiding your congregation or organization on your journey of calling a new rostered leader – minister of Word and Sacrament (Pastor) or minister of Word and Service (Deaconess, Diaconal Minister, or Associate in Ministry). Like any journey, it will be filled with complications, unforeseen obstacles and setbacks – but also straightaways and smooth stretches.

Remember that on all our journeys of faith we are never alone. God is always with us, lighting our path and guiding our footsteps.

Step 1: Leadership Vacancy

Preparing for departure

There is no “perfect order” for the following tasks that need to be accomplished to say goodbye to a departing leader and preparing the way for calling a new leader. Congregations should develop a plan in consultation with their conference dean or assistant to the bishop

- As soon as possible after the announcement of the rostered leader's resignation, the conference dean and/or assistant to the bishop who relates to the congregation will schedule a meeting with the Congregation Council. This meeting will review the work needed ahead:
 - Planning for interim ministry, including an interim pastor, if needed.
 - Understanding the call process;
 - Choosing a Call Committee (See congregation constitution *C9.01. and C13.05.); (See IV. Guidelines for Call Committee, pages 7-8)
 - Initiating a study of congregational ministry needs through completion of the Mission Site Profile. The preparation of this profile is not to begin until after the departing pastor's last day of service to the congregation.
- The Congregation Council needs date for an exit interview with the departing rostered leader. Appendix A, which is sent to the rostered leader from the bishop's office, guides this face-to-face exit interview.
- The council should honor and celebrate the outgoing leader's service to the congregation by planning an event, such as dinner or a reception (to which other church and community leaders could be invited), and formal goodbye in the final worship service. The council may also consider a farewell gift. The council could appoint a team to plan these events. The council may wish to use "Order for Farewell and Godspeed" in Occasional Services during the last worship service presided over by the pastor or attended by the other rostered leader. (See Appendix F for other possible rites.)

- A congregation must settle financial obligations, such as salary and compensating benefits, to its outgoing rostered leader before calling a successor. Similarly, the leader must settle any debt to the congregation before taking a new call or finalizing retirement, and a report must be submitted promptly to the bishop of synod.
- Once a leader's service has ended, the leader and congregation shall no longer maintain any ministerial relationship, formal or informal. This is to assist the congregation in "moving on" and to preserve the ministerial authority of the successor leaders. The council and leader will review and sign "Covenant of Closure," Appendix L, which outlines the following.
 - The departing leader must transfer official membership to another congregation and refrain from attending worship services at the former congregation.
 - The leader shall refuse invitations to perform pastoral acts (including weddings, baptisms, funerals, worship functions) or pastoral care (such as hospital visits or personal consultation) for the former congregation's members.
 - The departing leader shall refrain from seeking information about congregational affairs or offering advice, formally or informally, to any member or lay leader of the congregation. (But the leader may, upon the successor leader's invitation, be available for private consultation.)
 - Neither the congregation nor its members shall invite, ask or expect the departing leader to perform pastoral services.
 - The congregation shall publicize this "no contact policy" to its members.

Interim Word and Sacrament Ministry

Pastors – those ordained into ministry of Word and Sacrament – perform essential leadership roles in congregation. The bishop of synod is responsible, along with the Congregation Council, for maintaining pastoral oversight of the congregation in between called pastors.

Under most circumstances, when a pastor leaves a congregation an interim pastor needs to be appointed to provide ministry until a permanent leader is chosen. Exceptions might be in a big church that has multiple staff and can provide ministry continuity.

Here are some important steps, guidelines and consideration. Again, Congregation Councils may consult with their dean or assistant to the bishop to form a strategy.

- When there is no interim pastor yet in place, and on occasions when the interim pastor cannot serve weekly services (such as for a vacation) the Congregation Council is responsible for securing "supply pastors" to conduct worship. The bishop's office stands ready to assist the council in arranging for supply pastors.
- Working together under the authority of the bishop, the dean and assistant to the bishop select the interim pastor or rostered leader during the congregation's transition.
 - Ordinarily the dean and/or assistant to the bishop will meet with the Congregation Council to introduce the interim leader, finalize plans for the interim leader's ministry and sign a Letter of Agreement.

- The Letter of Agreement should detail the term of service, compensation and expectations of duties and mutual responsibilities. It is signed by the congregation, interim leader and dean or assistant to the bishop.
- **For interim pastors**, here are the principal duties and considerations (our Synod Constitution S14.17 provides detailed guidance):
 - An interim pastor's primary responsibility is attending to the congregation's needs for Word and Sacrament ministry, as well as caring for basic pastoral needs, such as emergency sick calls, catechetical instruction, pastoral acts, pastoral guidance for the council and the congregation, etc.
 - The interim pastor generally guides the congregation through the transition period that follows a pastor's departure. An interim pastor assists the congregation in grieving the former pastor and preparing for a new pastor. In cases where a pastor has left amid conflict, misconduct or pain, the interim pastor assists in the healing process.
 - Administratively, the interim pastor is responsible for the annual parochial report, maintaining the official parish register and other crucial functions. The interim pastor generally attends Congregation Council meetings, and perhaps other key leadership meetings as determined by the pastor and council.
 - Especially in the case of part-time interim pastors, an interim pastor may not be expected to fill every role of the permanent pastor. Duties and expectations should be discussed in advance and clarified in the Letter of Agreement to be signed at the beginning of the interim pastor's service. The council may wish to designate leaders or committees to oversee certain aspects of the congregation's interim life -- such as the newsletter, care of church property and other administrative tasks.
 - An interim pastor shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of the new rostered leader (Congregational Constitution § *9.07.)
- Any pastor on the roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is qualified to serve as interim pastor, as are (with the bishop's permission) pastors in good standing in one of the six denominations with which the ELCA is in full communion partnership: the United Methodist Church, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Church of Christ, the Reformed Church in America and the Moravian Church.
- By synod policy, an interim pastor is ineligible to be a candidate for the permanent call. Exceptions to this may be made only in advance of the interim pastor's service with the permission of the synod bishop. In these cases, the exception will be reflected in the interim pastor's Letter of Agreement.
- Upon completion of service, the interim pastor shall certify to the bishop's office, through the dean, that the parochial records are in order.
- It is appropriate to begin the service of an interim pastor with a rite of welcome or welcoming receptions. At the conclusion of the interim pastor's time, the congregation may wish to honor the pastor's service with a reception, gift or farewell ritual. (See Appendix

Interim Word & Service Ministry

Rostered leaders who are commissioned or consecrated to ministry of Word and Service (Associate in Ministry, Deacon, Diaconal Minister or Deaconess) serve our congregations or institutions in valuable positions, such as chaplain, youth director, music minister, Christian educator, parish nurse, volunteer coordinator or pastoral care director.

- When an interim is needed, the dean and assistant to the bishop will ordinarily find and present candidates for the congregation, then work with the congregation on a satisfactory Letter of Agreement that details compensation, term of service and duties.
- It is appropriate to begin the service of an interim pastor with a rite of welcome or welcoming receptions. At the conclusion of the interim pastor's time, the congregation may wish to honor and appreciate the pastor's service with a reception, gift or farewell ritual.

Step 2: Establish a Call Committee

The Call Committee is elected by the congregation or council (depending on the congregation's constitution *C9.01. and C13.05.) to fulfill THE crucial role in the transition process. This committee lays all the groundwork for a congregation to call a new pastor and plays the primary role in the next five steps covered in this manual:

- Write the Mission Site Profile
- Receive names
- Interview candidates
- Interview candidates again or see them lead worship
- Recommend to council

Here are guidelines and considerations for the Call Committee:

- Congregations must wait until after the departing leader has completed service before establishing a Call Committee. During the final weeks or months of the departing leader's service the congregation should be focused on honoring, respecting and saying goodbye to that leader – not beginning the work of choosing a replacement!
- Congregations should not establish a Call Committee until after the Congregation Council has met with the dean or assistant to the bishop to review the process.
- According to the approved constitution for congregations in the ELCA, the Call Committee consists of six leaders
 - One should be a member of the Congregation Council, but only one.
 - The council president or vice president are ineligible to serve on the Call Committee.
 - Congregational employees, staff and their immediate family members are ineligible to serve.
 - Family members of the departing leader are ineligible to serve.

- Other members of the Call Committee should be responsible leaders, representative of the congregation in their diversity of age, gender and theological viewpoints.
- The Call Committee will choose one of the members as a chair.
- The congregation, Congregation Council, and Call Committee all recognize that calling a rostered leader is not the same as hiring an employee for a job. All who are involved in the process are seeking to discern the leading of God’s Holy Spirit.
- Call Committee members are to approach the call process with an openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit rather than with preconceived biases or ideas about their next leader. In addition, Call Committee members must be willing to be in constant prayer and to spend whatever time and energy is needed to discern the leading of the Spirit. (See Appendix N for reflections on God speaking to a call committee.)
- It is a good practice for the Call Committee to appoint a Chaplain in addition to a Chair. The Chaplain should lead the Call Committee in prayer and discernment of leading of the Spirit.
- The Triune God, who instituted and empowers the office of ministry, calls persons to fill this office. As God called Matthias through prayer and the casting of lots (Acts 1:15-26), so God calls pastors through the call process, which is undergirded by prayer.
- Expenses of the Call Committee, such as travel for members and candidates, are the responsibility of the congregation.

Step 3: Write a Mission Site Profile

The Mission Site Profile is a brief but comprehensive document that captures the essence of the congregation or institution that is looking for a rostered leader. It contains basic information – addresses, telephone numbers, size, mission and budget of the organization – but also the organization’s perceived strengths, weaknesses, challenges and needs. A well-researched and well-written Mission Site Profile clearly and honestly portrays the institution and assists in finding the best candidate to fill the leadership role.

- **The Call Committee** ordinarily takes the lead in preparing a congregation’s Mission Site Profile. As the Mission Site Profile is prepared, it is important to do the following:
 - Look seriously at the congregation, the community, and the congregation's place in it.
 - Define strengths and weaknesses in order to determine ministry needs.
 - Set some realistic goals for the next several years.
 - Clarify the expectations of a new rostered leader.
 - Outline what will be the financial support for the new rostered leader.
 - Contact the assistant to the bishop in order to initiate the development of the congregation's mission planning process.
 - Maintain a transparent and open process in soliciting input and comment about the developing Mission Site Profile.

- Because the profile should broadly reflect the sentiments and opinions of the congregation as a whole, Call Committee members may find it helpful to consult with congregation members, council members and other leaders. Cottage meetings and newsletter or bulletin surveys are excellent ways to gain input from the congregation. Recognize that it may be necessary to employ multiple techniques to engage congregation members in the process of preparing the congregation's mission site profile.

Creating a Mission Site Profile

The Mission Site Profile is created, worked on and stored electronically in our denomination's main computer system in Chicago. Creating and editing it requires a reliable computer and Internet connection. Instructions and a starting place are to be found on our denomination's website: <http://www.elca.org/en/Call-Process/Ministry-Sites>.

- Here are the steps that a congregation may expect:
 - First a Call Committee must establish an account with the ELCA computer system to access and work on the profile. Establishing an account will give the congregation a unique user name and password.
 - Establishing an account will require call committee to provide an email address that will serve as an official contact between the ELCA system and the congregation.
 - Because the email should be accessible to current and future leaders, a personal email address should not be used.
 - The general church office email may be used, as may a special account created just for the Call Committee (for example, callcommittee@lutheranchurch.com, or stjohncallcommittee@gmail.com.)
 - Save the email address, account login and password so that future call committees or church administrators can access the ELCA system.
 - Account setup requires some specific information about the congregation, such as the congregation ID number. The synod office may help provide that information.

Working on a Mission Site Profile

Filling out a Mission Site Profile requires the teamwork of the Call Committee.

Start with a meeting where the committee reviews a blank copy of the profile document and discusses the potential answers to questions. The committee can toss around ideas, as well as determine what research, survey or consultation needs to happen to adequately address the issues.

It may be helpful for the committee to delegate certain areas or answers on the profile to members who can then report back to the group. At subsequent meetings the committee can discuss the progress, refine answers and bring the MSP to completion.

As the committee works, here are some tips and ideas.

- The committee should not rush the process, but approach the profile with careful diligence. The important objective is that the profile honestly and accurately reflect the congregation's strengths, growing edges, potential, and hopes for the future.
- The committee should carefully read the instructions and questions for each section and provide answers that completely address the issues asked for. If the committee is not sure what is being asked, the dean or assistant to the bishop may provide clarification.
- The committee may find it helpful to designate only one person as the MSP's writer, or perhaps a team of two. They should have good language skills and be able to distill the committee's thoughts and express them clearly. They should also work well with computers and online forms.
- The Mission Site Profile is meant to reflect the impressions of the congregation and not only one or two members of the Call Committee; therefore, it is important to keep this part of the process open and transparent so that the entire congregation is engaged in the process and has an opportunity to be heard.
- The MSP is completed live and online in sessions that begin when the writer logs into the congregation's account. When the writer is done with that session, he or she must save the profile and exit.
- At any time, the writer can make a PDF copy of the work so far to share with members of the committee.
- When it is done to the satisfaction of the committee, the MSP is submitted through the ELCA computer system, at which time it is also accessible to our synod office. The synod office will finalize, or "activate" the profile only after the next step, the MSP Review.

The Mission Site Profile Review

After the Call Committee has submitted its profile, it should arrange a meeting with the Call Committee, the Congregation Council, the dean and assistant to the bishop to look at the profile in detail.

The purpose of the review is to bring together the leaders who know the congregation well in order to point out weaknesses or inaccuracies in the profile, as well as to suggest ways to strengthen the profile.

Copies of the completed profile should be provided in advance to all who will attend the meeting, with instructions to read through the profile carefully.

At the meeting, the assistant to the bishop and dean will lead the gathering through the profile section by section, providing insight and inviting comments, clarifications and suggestions.

From the comments made at the meeting, the Call Committee then finalizes the profile and submits it again through the ELCA system. At this time, the synod staff will "activate" the profile.

Step 4: Receive Names of Candidates

The Call Committee is now able to consider candidates for the new rostered leader. These are the candidates that are recommended by the bishop and staff for the position. Each candidate will have reviewed the Mission Site Profile and expressed interest in serving.

- The assistant to the bishop and/or dean will meet with the Call Committee to present the names and profiles of candidates that the bishop and staff recommend.
 - The Call Committee may consider only those candidates recommended and presented by the bishop's office. If a Call Committee desires to consider any other candidate, the request may be made to the assistant to the bishop.
 - In a departure from past synod practice, the congregation may be given multiple candidates to consider simultaneously. Depending on the number of qualified candidates available, the congregation may receive up to three profiles. This may help to speed up the call process and also give Call Committees a better sense of the relative strengths and weaknesses of any candidate.
 - At the same time, in another departure from past synod practice, a candidate may receive the profile of more than one congregation at a time.
- In the case of a rostered leader who will serve under the supervision of a pastor or senior pastor, supervising pastor will have the opportunity to review and approve candidates before their names are given to the Call Committee. Both the pastor/senior pastor and prospective candidate must agree to proceed before the materials are presented to the Call Committee.

Confidentiality is crucial!

Up to now, the Call Committee has been working in an open and transparent manner with the congregation and its leaders to gather information and create the Mission Site Profile. Beginning with this step the Call Committee needs to observe **strict confidentiality**. The congregation has entrusted and charged the Call Committee with the task of selecting a candidate to be the new rostered leader, and although many other leaders will be dying to know what's going on and want to "help out," the work is for the Call Committee members alone. A breach of confidence can compromise the integrity of the process and severely hamper the work of the Call Committee.

Moreover, a breach of confidence can seriously harm the work of the candidates, whose home congregations might not be aware they are looking for a new call. If word gets out to the people they serve, candidates may suffer a loss of trust and effectiveness in their calls.

- For sake of the work of the Call Committee and the candidates to be evaluated, here are considerations for maintaining confidentiality.
 - Members of the Call Committee must not reveal the names or discuss details about the candidates to anyone outside of the committee, including spouses, best friends, Congregation Council members, and former rostered leaders. Nobody.

- Members must not share the profiles of candidates with anyone outside the committee.
- To discourage people from trying to “puzzle out” the identities of the candidates, members should refrain from sharing any details about the candidates whatsoever, including gender, age, length of service, where they are from, where they went to school, whether they are married and have children, etc.
- Members must not contact people from a candidate’s congregation, except those listed as references on the candidate’s profile.
- Members must not visit a candidate’s congregation.
- Members must keep the identities of all candidates confidential even after the process is completed and a leader has been called.

Reviewing profiles

A candidate’s profile is similar to the Mission Site Profile in that it contains not only basic information – name, addresses, education, references, etc., -- but also the candidate’s identified strengths, weaknesses, hopes, dreams and expectations.

- Members may divide among themselves the responsibility for contacting the references. References may be asked to submit comments in writing that the committee will share. If a member interviews the reference by telephone, notes of the talk should be shared with the committee.
- Candidates generally indicate in their profile what supplemental materials they can offer, such as a video or audio recording of a sermon, letters or reference or a full resume. The committee can decide together whether to request supplemental materials.
- All communication to candidates should be directed through the chair of the Call Committee. It is not appropriate for other members to be in contact with candidates, except under the direction of the chair.
- Members are free to look at the website of a candidate’s congregation and discuss what they find there among themselves.

Step 5: Interviewing Candidates

Interviewing is necessary for every candidate. A Call Committee may rule out any candidate from consideration, but only after first interviewing him or her. The reason is that some candidates look good on paper but may not do well face-to-face. Other candidates may not look good on paper but will shine in an interview. Moreover, it is a matter of respect and honor to talk to every candidate.

- Every Call Committee member should be present at every interview.

Contacting Candidates

The chair of the Call Committee maintains communication with the candidate. Participating in a call process can be stressful for rostered leaders. They appreciate knowing the timetable for a decision and receiving information concerning their candidacy. Often the first impression a rostered leader has of a congregation is based on contacts with the Call Committee. A wise committee treats all candidates with the respect and courtesy accorded the pastor or other rostered leaders of its congregation.

- The committee chair promptly (within a day or two) contacts the candidate to set up a time to meet with the committee.
- Committee members should work together to come up with numerous potential meeting times so that the chair has options to discuss with every candidate.
- The time and place of the meeting should respect the privacy and confidentiality of the committee's work.
- The chair will inform the candidate whether the committee will send additional material (annual report, budget, map of the community, community information, etc.) to help prepare the candidate for the interview. A group photograph of the Call Committee may be included so that candidates will know who is who.
- A candidate's spouse or family should not be invited to the initial meeting but may attend or be asked to attend a second interview or subsequent meeting with council.
- The chair may request the candidate to provide supplemental materials listed in the profile.

Preparing for the Interview

The committee carefully studies the profile, references and other materials it has gathered. Members may also want to review their Mission Site Profile to make sure they understand the congregation's needs.

- Together members may decide on what areas to ask about and come up with a list of questions. Sample questions in Appendices Q and R may provide guidance. If desired, the committee may wish to distribute the questions among committee members.
- For the interview, a comfortable room is best. Precise directions should be given to the candidate, telling not only how to get to the church, but also how to locate the room, where to park, and which door to use.

Interviewing

The candidate should be welcomed warmly. The interview should be as relaxed as possible, following the patten of a conversation rather than a stiff Q & A.

- Candidates should be afforded courtesy and respect. Questions and follow-ups should be asked respectfully.
- The committee should encourage questions from the candidate. They should be answered honestly and courteously.

- The committee should give the candidate a tour of the church and facilities.
- The candidate should be reimbursed for travel expenses, such as mileage, tolls, meals and lodging.
- Remember that the call process involves mutual discernment; therefore, questions should be designed to engage the candidate and the committee in the discernment process and not be designed to reflect a “courtroom” examination or a police “interrogation.”

After the Interview

Immediately following the interview, the committee should convene to debrief and discuss.

- What is the general sense of each member about the candidate? What did everyone like? What were areas of concern? This immediate debriefing is important.
- Does the committee desire to go forward with the candidate? If so, how (another interview, or to see a worship service)? The committee may wish to interview all candidates before deciding on this step.
- When a candidate is dropped from consideration, the committee reports the decision by a letter to the candidate to which the assistant to the bishop is copied. The letter should express gratitude for the candidate's interest in the congregation but also give some reasons for the committee's decision. (See Appendix P for a sample letter.)
- After interviewing with a congregation, a candidate may also decide to withdraw from the process and should notify the Call Committee by letter.
- For candidates remaining under consideration, one of the next steps may be taken.

Step 6: Additional Interview or Worship Service Led by Candidate

The Call Committee is empowered to seek as many interviews as it needs in order to make an **informed** decision that is best for the congregation. To arrange additional interviews, the procedure outlined above can be followed.

- For pastoral candidates, in addition to follow-up interviews, the Call Committee may desire to see the candidate lead worship and preach. The chair should be in contact with the pastor and the assistant to the bishop to arrange this.
 - All members of the Committee should attend the services. If a member is unable to attend, that member may go separately with the knowledge and approval of the Call Committee and the knowledge of the candidate. If a member must attend a worship service separately, they may not bring anyone with them other than another member of the Call Committee.
 - With the consent of the pastoral candidate, he or she may be observed in the home congregation, providing that the worship service is large enough for the Call Committee to visit without causing a disruption and arousing suspicion.
 - In visiting a congregation or worship, Call Committee members should be discrete.

- They should never arrive together and sit together. Instead, members should arrive alone or in pairs, at different times, and sit in different areas.
- Likewise, they should not all leave together.
- Members should not sign the guest register.
- They should not tell ushers, greeters or friendly congregants that they are members of a Call Committee. A simple, “We’re just visiting” will suffice.
- For out-of-synod candidates, or for candidates who are not comfortable entertaining a Call Committee at their home congregation, the assistant to the bishop can help arrange a worship service at a “neutral site” that will help maintain confidentiality in the process.
 - Call Committee members should still act with discretion.
 - Ordinarily the candidate is not compensated as a supply pastor for this work.
 - The candidate should be reimbursed for travel expenses, such as mileage, tolls, meals and lodging.
- Immediately after worship, the Call Committee should meet to debrief and decide whether to go forward with the candidate. If the decision is to drop the candidate from consideration, the committee informs the candidate and assistant to the bishop by letter, as explained above. (See Appendix I for a sample letter.)
- At this stage the candidate may also decide to withdraw from the process and should notify the Call Committee by letter.

Step 7: Recommend to Council

If the Call Committee is satisfied that the candidate for pastor or other rostered leader is the right choice, and if the candidate has not withdrawn, members may vote to recommend the candidate to the Congregation Council. The vote must be unanimous.

Following a unanimous vote on a candidate, the chair of the committee immediately informs by telephone both the candidate and the assistant to the bishop what action was taken.

If the candidate agrees to meet with the council, the council president or vice president is notified and a date for this meeting is set.

Step 8: Council Interviews Candidate

The council president calls a special council meeting to interview the recommended candidate. This interview does not occur at a regularly scheduled council meeting.

- In preparation for the meeting:
 - The Call Committee prepares a biographical sketch of the candidate and other important data to be given to the Congregation Council(s) at the special meeting.

- In advance of the meeting, the Call Committee works with the candidate and congregational finance leaders to come up with a proposed compensation package. (See Appendix M.)
- Conducting the interview:
 - On the day of the interview, the Call Committee meets with the Congregation Council (joint council meeting if a multiple parish) 30 minutes to an hour before the candidate in order to review materials and discuss why it has recommended this candidate.
 - The council may ask questions concerning the rationale for calling this candidate.
 - Questions about other candidates are not permitted. All such information is to remain confidential.
 - When it is time to meet with the candidate, the Call Committee introduces him or her.
 - Council members and the candidate ask questions of one another until all appropriate issues have been discussed.
 - Specifics about compensation, moving expenses and housing needs shall be included. Please note: the monetary figures set forth in the mission site profile, the rostered leader profile and the synod salary guidelines all use different methods to calculate the figures; thus, they **cannot** be directly compared. It is crucial that everyone understands what numbers are being used and discussed.
 - At the end of the interview the candidate is thanked and excused. (The candidate may be asked or to wait in another part of the building.)
 - The Call Committee is excused to allow Council to deliberate on the candidate.
 - The council interview is not designed to determine if the council would have recommended a different candidate; instead, the council interview is designed to determine if the proposed candidate meets the wants and needs of the congregation as set forth in the mission site profile.

Step 9: Council Recommends Candidate to the Congregation

The council continues discussion until it is ready to vote whether or not to recommend the candidate and compensation package to the congregation. Note that the candidate and compensation package are presented to the congregation in a single recommendation. It is not appropriate to recommend the compensation package in one resolution and the candidate in the other. Council gives to the congregation a combined recommendation for a yes or no vote.

- An affirmative vote.
 - A vote to recommend a candidate to the congregation needs a majority. It need not be unanimous, but it must be strong, i.e., not more than 1 or 2 "no" votes. Weak votes may be vacated by council action.

- The recommendation to call, as it appears in the council minutes, includes the name of the rostered leader, the date of the meeting at which the council voted, the name of the congregation, and the date and time of the congregation meeting.
- After a vote to recommend, within two days the president will communicate the decision to the candidate (or immediately, if he or she is on the premises) and the assistant to the bishop.
- The candidate has the option of withdrawing from the process.
- If the council(s) desires to recommend the candidate to the congregations(s), the following items are to be clarified:
 - Base salary, housing, and Social Security allowance
 - Pension, medical/dental and disability coverage
 - Vacation schedule
 - Date of special congregation meeting for the election
 - Starting date.
 - Congregation's coverage of moving expenses
 - Other items of mutual concern.
- A “no” vote.

If the candidate is not approved by council, the Call Committee chair or council president notifies the candidate in person, notifies the assistant to the bishop, and reconvenes the committee to continue the search. The committee may wish to retire. In that event a new committee must be elected/appointed.

Step 10: The Congregational Meeting

The council president discusses with the candidate possible dates and events for his or her presentation to the congregation, at which a congregational meeting will be called and a congregational vote taken. The Congregation Council then schedules a special congregational meeting.

- The congregational meeting must be called in accordance with the timetable and notification requirements outlined in the congregation’s constitution. The official notification of the meeting shall be accompanied by a clear statement of the purpose, a copy of the recommendation(s) that appear in the minutes of council, details of the financial package, a sketch of the rostered leader’s life and work history, and other helpful information.
- A copy of the official notification materials will be sent to the assistant to the bishop.
- The congregation president notifies the assistant to the bishop of the time and place of the call vote. The assistant to the bishop then arranges for a synod representative to be present to supervise the call vote.

- In the case of a candidate for pastor, the congregational meeting will take place after he or she has led worship and preached for the congregation.
- For a congregation or parish that ordinarily has multiple services, the congregational meeting may be held in successive sessions. Or, the congregation or parish may choose to consolidate and hold only one service on that day.
- Before the congregation is informed of the specifics of the compensation package, the information is sent for review to the assistant to the bishop, using Appendix M, Definition of Compensation Benefits, and Responsibilities.
- Note that the candidate still has the option of withdrawing from the process.

Step 11: The Vote to Call

We're almost there! The call vote is done at the congregational meeting at which the candidate is presented to the congregation.

Preparations

In advance of the meeting, congregation members will have been given official notification, described above.

- The assistant to the bishop will have reviewed and approved of the compensation package (Appendix M).
- The synod office will have sent the congregational president a packet of information, including the person who will conduct the call vote and some instructions.
 - Prepare a copy of the council resolution to recommend the calling of the candidate. This is to be given to the synodical representative at the call vote.
 - Prepare a copy of passages from the congregation's constitution that specify what constitutes a quorum at a congregational meeting and who qualifies as a voting member. This is to be given to the synodical representative at the call vote.

Accommodations

- If needed, arrangements for overnight accommodations should be made. If the candidate's family is present, it may be helpful to give them a tour of the area.
- Travel, meals and lodging should be paid for by the congregation.

Meet and greet

- Typically before the congregational meeting the congregation arranges a time of fellowship for members to talk with the candidate.
- It is recommended that name tags be provided for everyone, that the time be informal and relaxed. Refreshments may be offered.

- The time should conclude with a more-formal period that offers the congregation to question the candidate.

After the worship service has been conducted, the prospective rostered leader and his/her family will go to another room. The meeting will be opened with prayer by the president of the council. The presence of a quorum will be determined, declared, and noted in the minutes. The quorum is established by the congregation's constitution/bylaws.

Voting procedure

- After worship, the candidate and his or her family is excused and waits the vote count in another part of the building.
- The council president opens the meeting and reads the motion of council to the congregation. Because the recommendation comes to the congregation from the Congregation Council, it comes as though moved and seconded and does not need to be seconded at this time.
- The congregation will be given the opportunity to ask questions of clarification of the council president or of the Call Committee chair, as appropriate.
- The meeting is turned over to the synodical representative who will explain the voting procedure and rules.
 - Only eligible voting members may cast a ballot.
 - The vote will be by secret ballot on official ballots brought by the synodical representative.
 - No absentee votes or proxy votes are accepted.
 - A two-thirds (2/3) majority of the votes cast shall be necessary for election. When such a vote is given, it is mandatory that the call be issued. (See page 17 "Special Situations".)
 - The rostered leader has 30 days to accept or decline the call.
- Upon the direction of the synodical representative, tellers appointed by the council president will distribute, collect, and count the ballots. The synodical representative shall go with the tellers to oversee the counting.
- The congregation will await the tellers' report. Hymns may be sung during the count.
- The chief teller and synodical representative certify the vote on an official form.
- The tellers, synodical representative and the candidate (if the vote is affirmative) return to the meeting and the synodical representative announces the result.

After the vote

- If the call is approved, the synodical representative will declare the election of the candidate.
- The candidate may verbally accept and address the congregation. However, the candidate may take up to 30 days to accept or decline.

- If the required two-thirds majority is not met, the synodical representative will declare that the candidate has not been elected.
- The council president and Call Committee chair meet with the assistant to the bishop to discuss what caused the failure to elect and to plan how to renew the search.

Step 12: The Leader Accepts (Halleluiah!)

- When the leader has notified the congregation council president or vice president in writing of an intention to take the call, he or she should specify a start date (usually within two months).
- The congregation should immediately notify the synod office and share the news to the congregation.

Paperwork

- The bishop's office supplies official call forms in triplicate for use by the officers of the congregation in issuing the call (See samples in Appendices S, T, U, and V).
- In filling out the compensation and benefits report (Appendix M), it is important for the rostered leader and the Congregation Council to itemize on E.1 those aspects of ministry to which the newly called rostered leader will give special emphasis and on E.2 of that same form ways in which the congregation will encourage and support the newly called rostered leader.
 - These expectations and responsibilities are to be shared with the congregation and Mutual Ministry Committee and then reviewed, evaluated, and updated periodically so that the ministry of rostered leader and congregation may be a faithful, fruitful, and satisfying one for rostered leader and congregation.
- Before the rostered leader signs the call documents, all three copies must be sent to the bishop for attestation. After the bishop signs the three forms, they are mailed to the rostered leader for signature. One copy of the completed form is kept by the rostered leader, one is forwarded to the synodical office and the third is given to the council. If the congregation receives assistance from the Division for Outreach, a fourth copy shall go to the staff member serving the Lower Susquehanna Synod, ELCA.
- The leader and congregation treasurer both individually need to file paperwork with Portico Benefits. The leader logs into myportico.porticobenefits.org to file a Change of Call Report. The treasurer logs into employerlink.porticobenefits.org to enroll the leader in the benefits program.
- The Call Committee meets to complete the evaluation of the call process (See Appendix O) and sends the form to the assistant to the bishop.
- The bishop sends to the rostered leader a congratulatory letter in which are given the next steps in the process.

- Arrangements for moving shall be made between the rostered leader and the officers of the calling congregation. The congregation is responsible for moving expenses.
- The council president and rostered leader will begin to plan the installation in consultation with the conference dean. Before installation can take place, this synod bishop's office must receive a copy of the newly called rostered leader's letter of acceptance and completed call documents, attested by the bishop and signed by the pastor or other rostered leader.
- If the rostered leader has been serving in the Lower Susquehanna Synod, the bishop's office must receive also a copy of the letter of resignation from the previous call, certification of parish records from the congregation the pastor served previously, and the completed exit evaluation.
- If the rostered leader has come from another synod, the bishop's office must receive a letter of transfer from that synod. Only after all these documents have been received will the bishop authorize the conference dean to install the rostered leader.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Multi-church parish

In the case of a parish with two or more congregations, each congregation votes separately on whether or not to call the pastor or other rostered leader.

- The votes are held by the synodical representative, uncounted, until after all worship services, when the votes are counted by a representative of each congregation.
- Each congregation in the parish needs to approve the call by 2/3 vote. If the call is approved, the congregations authorize the joint council to complete the call documents and the previously approved compensation and benefits documents.
- If one congregation approves the call and another does not, the call is not issued. No part of a joint parish calls a rostered leader without the participation of the other.

Multiple services

In the case of a congregation having two or more worship services on a Sunday morning, normally a vote is taken after each service. All votes are held by the synodical representative, uncounted, until after the final service, when all votes are counted.

Team Ministries

As the first step in the process of calling an associate pastor, deaconess, diaconal minister, or associate in ministry, the candidate meets with the pastor/senior pastor. The Call Committee receives the candidate's mobility papers only if the pastor/senior pastor and candidate agree to this next step.

When a candidate for pastor/senior pastor is under consideration to serve with an in-place associate pastor, deaconess, diaconal minister, and /or associate in ministry, that staff shall

not meet with the candidate until after he/she (the candidate) meets with the Congregational Council, unless the candidate requests to meet with the staff first.

When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents that accompany the call. These documents must be drafted in consultation involving the pastors, the Congregation Council, and the bishop of synod.

Term Ministries

A congregation may call a rostered leader for a specific term. This departure from the normal rule of permanency will be described in a statement of purpose that the bishop of synod shall approve.

Regularizing a Term Call

A congregation may issue a regular call to a rostered leader who has been serving under a term call.

- The process of regularization may begin halfway through the length of the term, with the congregation council acting as the call committee.
- The council vote to recommend the rostered leader to the congregation for a regular call need not be unanimous, but should be very strong, i.e., no more than one or two negative votes.
- A two-thirds positive vote by the congregation is necessary to issue the regular call to the rostered leader. (See sections III O, P, Q of this manual.)

Clergy Couples

In the case of clergy couples who are called jointly, if one pastor resigns or is no longer a pastor in the dual call, the pastorate is declared vacant, and both pastors' terms are completed.

- This provision shall be part of the call document.
- Should one of the pastors die, the bishop will meet with the surviving pastor and Congregation Council to review the call.

Part-time Ministries

To qualify as a call, part-time ministries require 15 hours of work each week (minimum) and must be in line with the synod salary compensation, and benefits guidelines in proportion to the number of hours per week.

Roster Transfer

Rostered leaders coming to the Lower Susquehanna Synod from another ELCA synod must

contact the bishop of their present synod to request a transfer of their clerical membership. This typically takes place once a call has been issued.

First Call

If your congregation has called a “first-call” rostered leader, please contact the synod office for helpful resources on how to increase your congregation’s healthy environment for first calls, as well as what their unique continuing education requirements are.

List of Appendices

This whole manual, plus a wide variety of resources can be found on the synod website.
www.lss-elca.org/leaders/call-manual-for-congregations/

Here is a list of some that are available:

- A - Exit Evaluation Form
- B – Certification of Church Records
- C -- Policies on Interim Pastor and Preaching Arrangement
- D -- Guidelines for Preaching Arrangements/Worship Supply Pastors
- E -- Council Worksheet for Interim Pastor
- F -- Services of Closure/Retirement
- G -- Mission Planning for Congregations in Transition
- H -- Litanies of Welcome/Farewell
- I -- Sample Letter to Candidate No Longer Being Considered
- J -- Questions a Call Committee Might Like to Ask a Prospective Pastor
- K -- Questions a Candidate Might Like to Ask a Prospective Congregation
- L – Covenant of Closure: Guidelines for Former Ministers and their Congregations
- M – Definition of Compensation Benefits, and Responsibilities
- N -- Hearing Voices – God Speaks to a Search Committee
- O -- Evaluation of the Lower Susquehanna Synod Call Process
- P -- Installation of a Rostered Person