



Sierra Pacific Synod
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The Interview Process for Call Committees

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Lutheran View of Call and Vocation

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship

We believe it is our Savior Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, who guides the call process. The calling of a pastor or deacon represents a valuable partnership between God, the calling congregation, and the Sierra Pacific Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. An ideal call process builds on trust, openness, and good communication. When the call process results in a good match between minister and congregation, the total mission of the church is furthered.

Luther Says...

“... God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these God gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where God pleases, and those who hear the Gospel. Nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call. All Christians are called to the ministry of serving God and neighbor, but for the sake of good order in the church certain Christians are specially called to the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament.”

The Call to Ordained Ministry

It is through the church that God calls certain Christians to ordained ministry. Once that call is discerned, the candidate devotes years to study, training, and preparation under the guidance of the whole church through the bishop and the candidacy committee. Not only does the local congregation participate in the call process, but so does the whole church through the Office of the Bishop

Discerning the Call of Your Specific Ministry

During the time of transition between pastors or deacons, a congregation is invited to engage in a spiritual discernment process to discover its call—what God wants the church to be and do in the next season of its life together

Without knowing where God is leading your congregation, a congregation cannot know what skills, direction, and priorities it needs in their pastor. Pastors are not called to provide the vision for congregations; pastors are called to help congregations move toward the vision they have for where God is taking them.

Once this becomes clear, the call committee, in consultation with Office of the Bishop, begins the discernment process of discovering who God is calling to be the pastor in this next chapter of your congregation's life and ministry. The discernment process is an exciting journey that will take you through specific steps but moves according to the Spirit's timing. Faithful attentiveness to and trust in the guidance of God's spirit, will help to make your journey rich and fruitful.

The Partnership Between the Whole Church and the Local Church

The local congregation is fully the church, but the local congregation is not all the church there is. The local congregation calls a person to be its pastor, but the whole church everywhere has a stake in who is called and how the call process is handled.

The call committee, the congregation council, and the entire congregation all participate fully in the process. As does the Office of the Bishop, who represents both the interest and the commitment of the whole church in seeing that the pastor called is suited to ministry under the call that is extended.

The Office of the Bishop has deep concern for the well-being of the congregation's life and ministry. The Office of the Bishop also has deep concern about the person and gifts of the prospective pastor. In the call process the Office of the Bishop, the congregation, and the prospective pastor or deacon work together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to bring about a new partnership that is faithful to the Gospel, empowers the local congregation in its ministry, and strengthens the whole church as people of God.

The Call Process is Unique

On the basis of our Lutheran theology, a pastor or deacon is *called*. The call process is not simply hiring a new employee for the church as would be done in a secular workplace. It is participating in God's own choice for the church by opening ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit who will guide, nudge, empower, inspire, comfort, and inform the journey toward finding new leadership.

Called, Not Placed

Unlike some other denominations, Rostered Ministers in the ELCA are not "placed" or "moved around" by bishops. Neither can congregation councils or senior pastors unilaterally secure rostered people for congregational leadership. All rostered ministers must be **called** by a congregational vote.

Called, Not Hired

The call process is not the same as the hiring process in other parts of society. The pattern that includes head hunting, résumé shuffling, or personality contests is highly inappropriate in the calling of a pastor. Neither is the call process like a popularity contest in which hosts of candidates present themselves to their best advantage so the call committee can select one as the winner. The ELCA call process is unique because it is an effort to discern what God wants for this congregation and for the whole church, in order that the Gospel may be proclaimed and the sacraments administered in accordance with the Gospel.

The Wrong and Right Questions

It is not appropriate for a call committee to be guided by questions such as: “Will the congregation like this pastor?” “Will they approve of the call committee’s choice of candidates?” “Will people feel good having this pastor around on Sunday morning?” “Will this person do for now until a better pastor comes along?” “How will this person look to the rest of the community?”

The foremost question for the call committee always should be “Is this is the person God intends this congregation to have as its pastor or deacon?” Human preferences and personalities should never come before the mission to which God calls the church. That is why every meeting of the call committee will include prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the work that is being done.

This means that candidates for the call will not be submitted — and should not be evaluated — on the basis of age, gender, race, physical limitations, or any other “human distinctions.” The call is about the spiritual gifts needed for leading and facilitating ministry in a particular setting; nothing more, and nothing less.

The Significance of Service on a Call Committee

Many people report that serving on a call committee turned out to be one of the most important things they ever did as members of a congregation. It allowed them to experience firsthand how the Holy Spirit works through committed Christians to help the church be faithful to its calling. It gave them an opportunity to see how the local congregation is vitally connected to the whole church. And it let them participate in opening a new chapter in the life and ministry of their congregation as part of the history long, worldwide Church of Jesus Christ.

Expectations

It is important to be clear about expectations. What do you and this congregation expect of your pastor in:

- Worship
- Learning, Teaching
- Stewardship leadership
- Fellowship leadership
- Witness, Evangelism, Outreach
- Pastoral Care
- Communication
- Administration
- Ecumenical leadership
- Service in the Sierra Pacific Synod/Wider Church
- Service Projects / Social Justice
- Other ...

Conversely, since congregational ministry is always a mutual ministry between the called minister and the congregation, what can or should the pastor or deacon expect of you in:

- Support of family and time for family life, or personal time / time with friends if single
- Compensation package
- Continuing education opportunities
- Opportunities to serve and lead at the synodical and churchwide levels
- Support through your prayers
- Honor and respect them as a leader in the Church
- Other...

Doing the “Rite Thing”

It's often helpful to listen carefully to the words that are spoken during the Rite of Installation. A pastor is asked, “*Will you...*”

- discharge your duties in harmony with the constitutions of the church (See Chapter 7.31.11 & 7.31.12 of ELCA Constitution; Chapter 14 of the Synod Constitution; and Chapter 9 of the Constitution for Congregations);
- preach and teach in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church;
- love, serve and pray for God's people; nourish them with the Word and Holy Sacraments, leading them by your own example in the use of the means of grace, in faithful service and holy living; and
- give faithful witness in the world, that God's love may be known in all that you do?”

And the congregation is asked, “*Will you...*”

- “receive this messenger of Jesus Christ, sent by God to serve God’s people with the Gospel of hope and salvation? Will you regard them as a servant of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God?;
- pray for them, help and honor them for their work’s sake and in all things strive to live together in peace and unity of Christ?”

Other “Right Now” Expectations

1. What are your expectations of the Call Process itself?
 - a. Do you clearly understand the process?
 - b. Do you understand the general time line for a “normal” process, and that this process ought neither be protracted nor rushed?
 - c. Do you understand how calling *your* pastor (or other rostered person) involves the entire synod and the whole church?
2. What are your expectations of this Call Committee?
3. What are your expectations of your Congregation Council?
4. What are your expectations of the Office of the Bishop?
 - a. In the ELCA, the Office of the Bishop and the congregation work in mutual consultation regarding the process and in identifying candidates for call. (*C 9.01*)
 - b. The bishop: attests Letters of Call, authorizes and provides for the installation of the pastor, authorizes and provides for the ordination of pastors.
5. What expectations do you have of yourself?
 - a. Pray; perhaps more than you have done in a while!
 - b. The Holy Spirit “calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies and keeps us united in faith.” (Luther’s *Small Catechism - The Apostle’s Creed, Article 3*)

Confidentiality Revisited

Confidentiality cannot be overemphasized in the task of calling a pastor. Mention of specific candidates outside the call committee meetings is inappropriate until the committee is ready with its recommendation to the congregation. It is important to keep all names and both verbal and written information about prospective candidates within the confines of the committee. Committee members will need to establish ground rules and boundaries, not only with the congregation at large, but also with those in their household or place of work.

Openness

Reporting regularly to the congregation council and to the congregation helps keep everyone on the same level of understanding about the process.

Holding Confidence

The Call Committee must keep all verbal and written information about each and every candidate strictly confidential.

The reasons for this are at least twofold.

1. The congregations the candidates are serving are (most likely) unaware that they are interviewing. If a name should get out and back to a candidate's congregation it could severely damage their ability to do effective ministry at that site. Never underestimate the "connectedness" - who knows whom - within the Lutheran community!
2. You run the risk of turning the whole congregation into a call committee. People will be second guessing why you decided what about whom; without having all the information - "the rest of the story" - before them. The call committee has been chosen and set aside to do this work on behalf of the congregation. The whole congregation will meet the final candidate when the time is right

Communication

While confidentiality is important, that does not mean secrecy. Every means ought to be utilized to keep the members of the congregation informed about the call committee's work and progress. There must be as much transparency as possible. Consider using:

1. **Newsletter articles** explaining the call process to the congregation; with follow-up articles each time another stage in the process is reached.
2. Notes in the **Sunday bulletin** announcing that the call committee is meeting helps keep the congregation informed of progress.
3. **Temple Talks** by a member of the call committee to update the congregation on a weekly basis might also be welcomed. (Even if the report is "nothing has changed from last week" - it is very helpful to let people know what is happening in the call process. Also, from one week to the next, you will not be reporting to exactly the same audience).
4. **Announcements via email or newsletters** to announce open meetings.
5. **Have a Website section or page** dedicated to the Transition Process.
6. **Forums** can be used to make sure the congregation understands the call process; and to update them along the way. This format invites interaction and feedback.

As you keep the congregation informed:

- Always familiarize them with the process.
- Summarize specific presentations from the visit from the Office of the Bishop, and others the congregation may engage with during this time
- Keep them apprised of progress.
- Spell out preferred process for communicating with the members of the call committee

Do these things and:

- The congregation will begin to understand the process, including the roles of the Office of the Bishop, congregation council, call committee and congregation.
- The congregation will be able to identify and communicate with the members of the call committee.
- People will have a clear understanding of the proper process for communicating with the members of the call committee.
- Trust in the call committee will be strengthened
- Support for the outcome of the call process will be more likely.

With the exception of confidential materials, there is no such thing as too much information.

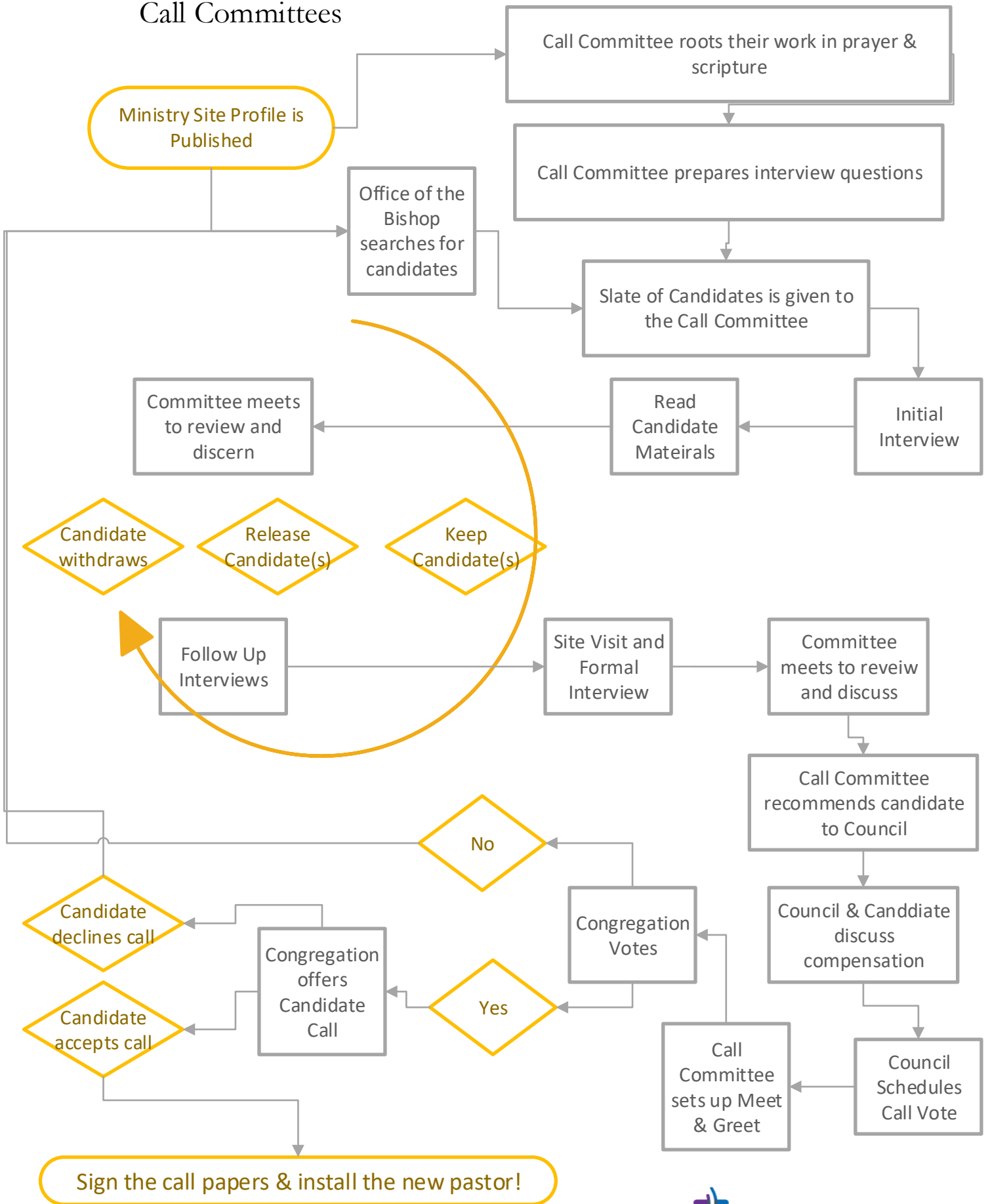
Ground Yourself

First and foremost, ground yourself in scripture and the Lutheran Tradition. After meeting with the synod staff about the process, use your first meeting to establish a working relationship and expectations rooted in our faith.

An outline for Bible Study, suggested Bible texts, and prayers for call committees can be found on the SPS website under "Resources for Congregations"

Only with a good foundation will the call process bring new life to the congregation. Taking the time to build understanding, common language, and trust between committee members - and with the rest of the congregation - can turn this anxious endeavor into a joyful launch into a church season.

Interview Process for Call Committees



Preparing for the Interviews

While the synod staff is searching for candidates, the call committee can take this time to prepare themselves and the questions for the interviews.

We strongly encourage you to spend 1-2 of your first meetings in study and prayer as preparation for the ministry you are doing. You can refer to the document "Congregation Call Committees" for guidance about the Lutheran understanding of vocation and call. In that resource you will also find guidance for Bible study and prayer. Investing in your work in this way will make this process more fulfilling and more successful.

When you are grounded, the committee can begin formulating their questions for interview. The Ministry Site Profile will serve as the outline for forming your questions. You will find additional suggestions in this packet.

Avoid asking questions which can be answered with a simple yes or no. For example, do not ask, "Do you think you are effective in your ministry to youth?" The candidate will almost surely answer, "Yes." Ask instead, "Tell us about your approach to ministry with youth," or "Give us some examples of how you have worked effectively with youth in your present or former parish."

In forming any particular question the key issue is, "What answer are you looking for? How will you know when it's answered well?" Each question may be evaluated in three ways: (a) What does it have to do with the position? (b) What do we need to know? (c) Would we be willing to answer the same questions about ourselves?

In each section of this booklet you will see sample questions. These questions can give you an idea of the focus of that interview and how to formulate your questions.

Receiving Candidates

When there are candidates identified for interview with your congregation, someone from the Office of the Bishop will pass on the candidates Rostered Minister Profiles (RMP) and help you get started.

Remember, the RMPs are confidential and not the entirety of the candidate's identity or ability. They should serve as a starting point for conversation with the candidate. When you have a question about something you read in the RMP it is best to discuss it with the candidate, or your representative from the Office of the Bishop. Later in the interview process you will have time to learn more about the candidate and get to know them.

The Initial Interview

After the committee has received the RMPs, the next step is to have an initial interview with each candidate. The committee must interview all candidates initially. This is the beginning of the conversation process and is not intended to answer in-depth questions. Instead, the initial interview is a time to establish who we are and how we are coming to this mutual discernment process.

The interview should occur with equipment that allows all members of the call committee to be visible and to interact with the candidate. We recommend using a video-call software such as Zoom. If your call committee needs assistance setting up a Zoom call, your interim pastor, church administrator, or Conference Dean can help you. If necessary, all the call committee members can be in-person in the same room. It is also possible for everyone to conduct the interview from their own homes.

All initial interviews should be conducted in the same media regardless of the candidate's location. This consistency in format ensures that there is equity in the way that candidates are perceived.

This interview is introductory and therefore should last 60-90 minutes. An appropriate agenda for the initial interview will look like this:

- Opening prayer
- Introductions of the Committee Members
- Introduction of the Candidate
- Committee Members ask their questions
- Candidate is invited to ask their questions
- Closing Prayer

The initial interview should begin and end with prayer. It is appropriate for a member of the committee to be designated to lead the group in prayer. It is also appropriate to ask the candidate to pray for the group. However, our questions should be limited in this conversation as the primary goal is to establish a relationship context in which we can learn more about this candidate.

The most important interview tool: Active Listening

Example Questions for the Initial Interview

These introductory questions are appropriate for an initial interview. Your congregation may want to tailor these to your specific context.

- Tell us about your life of faith.
- Why are you an ELCA pastor?
- Tell us about what brings you joy in ministry?
- Who have been influential people in your faith?
- Share your call story with us.
- Describe the areas of ministry which you value as high priorities.
- Describe your preaching philosophy and style.
- What are your hopes for the Church of Christ?
- Tell us about your challenges in ministry.

Gathering Materials & References

After the initial interview, the committee should study the materials shared by the candidates they interviewed (for example, the videos of worship and preaching and written materials). Additionally, the committee should contact the references provided in each candidate's RMP.

It is understandable that call committees will seek information about the candidates they are interviewing by searching for information about them online. During the candidacy process this is appropriate though, such searching should be careful not to breach the confidentiality of the process. For example, while we might find information about a candidate on social media, it is not appropriate to "friend" or "follow" a candidate on social media.

Suggested items to gather from each candidate are:

- Video (or audio) recording of a worship and/or preaching occasion
- A recent newsletter article or other writing they have done
- An annual report from their most recent ministry
- Letters of Reference
- Resume or Curriculum vitae

It is also strongly encouraged that the call committee should call all of the references provided by each candidate. These references may be former congregation members, mentors, supervisors, or synod staff persons. It is appropriate to call all of them. As you call references, it is advisable to take written notes so that you can convey the conversation to the rest of the committee as accurately as possible.

The committee should formulate questions for reference checks. Some suggested questions that might help you get started are:

- Dates of employment/relationship
- Tell me about the position and responsibilities [candidate] fulfilled.
- Why did [candidate] leave your congregation?
- What do you consider to be [candidate]'s strongest skills?
- What one or two areas of improvement could [candidate] work on?
- How would you characterize [candidate's] working relationship with co-workers?
- How would you characterize [candidate's] spoken and written communication skills?
- How would you characterize [candidate's] organizational skills?
- How would you characterize [candidate's] worship leadership?
- Is there any information I haven't asked for that you think would help us discern [candidate's] partnership with our congregation?

Materials to share with the Candidate

Information packets should also be prepared by the committee and sent to each candidate. Suggested items to include in the packet are:

a recent annual report

worship bulletins

newsletters

a listing of staff

a list of congregation council members and call committee members

a picture of the call committee

the congregation's constitution and mission statement

If these items exist online, giving a candidate a list of links is appropriate, rather than, or in addition to, mailing hard copies. You may also opt to include links to relevant local partners in ministry such as non profits, schools, businesses, or local government.

After the Initial Interviews & Research

Once all the materials have been reviewed and references contacted, the committee should gather to share in discernment. Conversation should include an assessment of the interviews, impressions of the shared materials, findings of the reference conversations, and prayer.

All members of the committee do not need to agree in their final assessments. At this time, the committee only needs to decide the following:

1. Are any of these candidates such an obvious mismatch that we would not like to continue in conversation with them?
2. What questions do we need to ask in the next interview to discern this call?

Follow Up Interviews

We strongly encourage the call committee to have a second Zoom interview with each candidate on their slate. If there is overwhelming consensus that a candidate is not called to be the pastor of your congregation it is appropriate to release the candidate from the call process. However, it is advisable that this introductory interview and research can provide for rich conversation and discernment in a longer, more intentional conversation.

Using the experience of the initial interview, the information gathered in the reference checks, and the questions prepared beforehand by the committee, the call committee may conduct as many follow up interviews as necessary for their discernment. Additionally, a candidate may request follow up interviews for their own discernment of this call.

The questions you have prepared in advance would be appropriate for these conversations. You can also find a list of sample questions at the end of this packet. Remember, these questions are intended to open a dialogue, so while your agenda may look similar to the initial interview, you will be well served to be open to more of a dialogue than a question and answer format. Nonetheless, these interviews should only last 90-120 minutes.

Each interview, like the initial interview must be conducted in the same manner and medium as the others. Even though the conversation will vary between candidates, the medium should remain the same to ensure equity.

The committee may conduct as many interviews as they desire. Our goal is to determine which candidates we would like to invite for an in-person site visit and formal interview.

It is ideal to invite as many viable candidates as possible to a site visit and formal interview with the call committee. This is a time when the committee and candidate can explore options for mutual ministry. However, the obligations and cost of a site visit may make it difficult for congregations to invite more than one candidate for a site visit. Therefore, the committee should conduct as many interviews as necessary via other means.

After each round of interviews, discern. As soon as possible, definitely within one week of the interview, the call committee should meet to share initial impressions. It is important that these shared impressions are recorded for later reference. The committee should also spend time in prayer and discernment. As the committee engages in the process of selecting one candidate to recommend to the congregation, it will be important to do several things:

- Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Clarify what it means for the committee to reach a consensus. We strongly discourage voting as a committee on candidates. The best practice is for prayer, conversation, and discernment to continue until consensus can be reached. A united front is the most effective way to communicate to the congregation that this candidate is the right match.
- Allow ample time for each committee member to speak and be heard.
- Come to a decision that takes into account the five top leadership needs of the congregation.
- Choose the most suitable candidate, not necessarily the one you think is most likely to accept the call.
- While listening to your own heart and impressions, go beyond asking “Which candidate do I favor?” Instead, ask “Which pastor can best serve our congregation?”

Discussion should continue until one of two possibilities is reached regarding each candidate:

Possibility 1

The discussion leads to the conclusion that this person is not the one the Holy Spirit is leading the congregation to call.

In this case, the call committee chairperson should inform the candidate and release them from the process. They should also inform the staff person relating to them in the Office of the Bishop.

Possibility 2

The discussion leads to the conclusion that this person may be the one whom the Holy Spirit is leading the congregation to call.

In this case, the call committee should invite the candidate to the next stage of the interview process.

Releasing Candidates

Courtesy and professionalism are essential during this process. The call committee needs to communicate openly and honestly with each candidate and shall continually inform the candidate about the status of their process.

Upon releasing a candidate from further consideration – whether after a phone, video, or a face-to-face interview – it is helpful for the candidate to hear the reasons why you do not think they would be a good match for your congregation at this time. This information is helpful to both the call committee and the candidate because it fosters clarity in the discernment process and gives the candidate an opportunity for growth.

What follows is a sample communication for releasing a candidate from the interview process.

Sample Release Letter

Dear Pastor So-and-So,

On behalf of the Call Committee of [Church Name], I would like to thank you for your willingness to be considered as a candidate for the position of [Pastor/Deacon].

We were impressed by [insert some of the qualities you admired in the candidate].

At this time we do not believe you would be a good match for our congregation

[include some of the details about why this is not a good match for your congregation].

At this time, we are releasing you from the interview process. We wish you blessings upon your continued ministry.

Sincerely,

F. Surname, Chair

[Church Name] Call Committee

Once released, a candidate may not be reconsidered.

If the committee is having difficulty in reaching a consensus on which candidates to invite to a site visit and which candidates to release you may want to consider inviting a conversation with your synod staff person or the Bishop of this synod to aid in your discernment. The committee may also consider asking for additional materials from the candidate that will provide additional context or information.

Preparing for the Site Visit

The site visit may last one or two days and is an opportunity for the candidate to get to know the call committee and community in depth. Suggested activities for the site visit are:

A tour of the physical plant of the congregation. Be sure to honor the confidentiality of the candidate by scheduling this tour at a time when the property is not occupied by committees, staff, or congregation member.

A tour of the community including any major industries or businesses, ministry partners, neighborhoods where members live, schools, and local ecology.

A shared meal with the call committee to provide an opportunity for social gathering and a more relaxed opportunity to share stories and make a connection.

A formal interview lasting 2 or more hours with the opportunity to dive deeply into questions of faith, mutual ministry, and discernment.

If appropriate (as in the interview of an associate pastor) a site visit might also be an opportunity for the candidate to meet the other executive staff of the congregation for one-on-one conversation.

All expenses for the site visit are covered by the congregation. One person from the call committee should be appointed to host the candidate. The host should communicate early and often with the candidate to make arrangements.

The host should:

1. Set up dates and times for interviews, tours, and other activities, taking into account any differences in time zone that might affect the candidate's schedule.
2. Arrange for travel, lodging (hotel/motel), and meals.
3. If the candidate is flying, provide pick-up/drop-off or a car rental.
4. Determine which committee members will initially meet and welcome the candidate.
5. Show the candidate (and their spouse/family, if applicable) around the area and provide periods of unstructured time for them to decompress away from the call committee.
6. Arrange meals for the candidate and their spouse/family if applicable.
7. Escort the candidate to the formal interview if applicable.
8. Ensure that many different call committee members have a chance to interact informally with the candidate. For example, the person who provides transportation should be different from the people with which the candidate shares meals.

The Formal Interview

The call committee should designate one member to host the candidate at the interview site. If the member is not accompanying the candidate to the interview, be certain that they are on-hand well before the candidate's anticipated arrival at the interview location.

The committee member chosen to direct the interview should outline the anticipated interview procedure for the candidate and indicate the time allotted for the interview. The candidate should be briefed on the "question and answer" format and alerted that they will have a chance to ask questions of the call committee. The lead interviewer is responsible for keeping the interview within the time allotted. Have all members of the call committee briefly introduce themselves to the candidate again, identifying their vocation and their role played in the congregation. It may be helpful to have the candidate begin the interview with a brief prayer, but if you choose to do this, be sure they are aware of this long before they arrive!

Before the committee begins asking the interview questions, it is appropriate for the committee chairperson to ask the candidate to briefly tell the committee something about themselves (this should take no more than five to seven minutes). After this, the formal questioning may begin. Questions may be assigned to various members of the call committee, assuring that all members are actively participating. Do not hesitate to ask follow-up or clarifying questions if an answer is unclear to all members. Remember, the interview is intended to be a dialogue, not an inquisition! Just as the committee members are discerning the candidate's viability for the congregation, so is the candidate discerning whether the congregation is a good fit.

One committee member may be designated to take notes on the candidate's responses during the interview for later review by the committee. Note-taking should be done as unobtrusively as possible and the lead interviewer should alert the candidate beforehand that notes will be taken.

In concluding the interview, the candidate may be invited to answer any questions not asked or make any other comments. The candidate should be thanked for coming and encouraged to be in phone contact with a designated member of the call committee if any additional questions arise. The call committee should indicate the approximate time table involved in the completion of the congregation's call process. If possible, at the conclusion of the interview, the committee should reimburse the candidate for any expenses incurred, such as travel costs, overnight accommodations, and meals. If the reimbursement cannot occur at the time of the interview, it should be completed within the following week and an appropriate explanation given to the candidate.

Recommending a Candidate to the Council

After the site visit, the committee should once again meet together for prayer and discernment. If there is a consensus of the committee that the remaining candidate is called to be the pastor of your congregation, the call committee will recommend this candidate for congregational vote.

This recommendation should be done at a special council meeting. At this meeting, the call committee should inform the council of the following:

- the process of how they got to this recommendation
- the highlights of who this candidate is
- the discernment of the committee
- why this candidate is called to be the pastor of the congregation

Discussing Compensation

When a candidate is recommended to the council, the chair of the call committee should contact the Office of the Bishop to arrange for a compensation meeting. This meeting will include the synod staff person or their representative, the candidate, the council, and any member of the call committee who would like to be present. The purpose of this introductory meeting is to review and establish guidelines for a conversation about compensation, benefits, and responsibilities.

The council is responsible for negotiating a compensation package with the candidate. The document *Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities for Minister of Word and Sacrament Under Call* must be completed. These details will determine the compensation package upon which the congregation will be asked to vote. The council and candidate may meet and communicate in whatever manner allows them to accomplish this work.

Recommending a Candidate to the Congregation

When the council has agreed upon a compensation package with the candidate, it is time to recommend the candidate to the congregation.

The congregation president shall call a special meeting of the congregation. The council will establish a date, time, and place for the special meeting of the congregation to vote on the call of the pastor and the compensation. Arrangements should be made to notify the congregation of the meeting according to the congregation's constitution.

Additionally, these groups will notify the Office of the Bishop. The bishop's office will supply the council and call committee with the needed documents, some sample help, and will arrange to have a representative of the Office of the Bishop present at the special congregational meeting where the vote is taken.

Meet and Greet

When the call committee has identified a final candidate to recommend to the congregation, a Meet and Greet weekend is highly recommended. This provides the members and friends of the ministry to meet the candidate (and their family, if applicable), to interact informally and maybe in some more formal ways. This time also allows the candidate to see the congregation in worship, spend time in the area, and research specific areas of interest or need. All costs for this weekend should be covered by the congregation. Be mindful of any changes in time zone the candidate will need to be navigating as you set the schedule.

The Meet and Greet should be scheduled in tandem with the special congregational meeting for the purposes of voting on the call.

A sample schedule is below. Please modify to meet the needs of the congregation and the candidate.

Friday

The candidate (and their family) arrive and settle into the hotel

A rental car - or the lending of a car is helpful so they can move about on their own

An informal dinner or BBQ at someone's home with the call committee, council, staff members, and their families. This allows time for more informal interaction and some good interpersonal time.

Saturday

This day is customized to meet the needs of the candidate (and their family). Be sure to schedule in some 'down time' in this day.

Saturday is the most opportune time for the members of the congregation to meet and interact with the candidate (and their family, if desired by the candidate). There are many options for how this can happen.

- A more formal Q&A where people have the opportunity to ask the candidate questions directly in a large group setting
- A more informal model is to have the candidate move from table to table during a fellowship time to have conversation with different people.
- A moderated conversation in a large group setting with questions that have been submitted ahead of time.

Sunday

You may want to invite the candidate and their family to join you for worship on Sunday. However, it is not appropriate to have the candidate pastor preach or preside at the table on this visit. Alternatives may be to introduce them during the welcome or have them say a few words of greeting during the announcements.

Other options for this day's schedule are:

Meet with realtor

tour rental properties

talk with people knowledgeable about school districts

free time to drive, walk, hike, or bike in the area

an extensive tour of the community

meet with ministry partners in the area

meet with staff members

The Special Congregational Meeting

The person presiding at the meeting will determine that a quorum is present according to the congregation's constitution and by laws.

At the special congregation meeting, there may only be two motions on the agenda. No other business may be conducted. The first motion made by the call committee chair, is that the congregation vote to call the pastor. It will be seconded and discussed. The call committee will present information about the candidate, why they were led to recommend this candidate to the congregation, and the strengths and gifts that the candidate offers to the ministry of the congregation.

Only the one name recommended by the call committee can be voted on at this meeting. The vote shall be by secret written ballot. No absentee or proxy votes shall be accepted. The vote to call the pastor must be at least 2/3 affirmative votes, as stated in the model constitution for congregations C9.01.

If the vote to call the pastor is successful, the second motion presented by the congregation council will be to approve the compensation package to be offered to the pastor. It will be seconded, discussed, and voted on by the congregation. Amendments to the package recommended by the council can be made by majority vote of the congregation.

The vote needed to approve the compensation package is a simple majority. It may be taken by voice vote, show of hands, or written ballot. It will be noted that if the amounts in the package differ from the approved budget, then a favorable vote, in effect, changes the budget for the year. Beyond constitutional limit, a separate motion must be brought to approve the new budget.

After the call and compensation package have been approved by an affirmative vote of the congregation, a personal contact by the call committee chair, or designee, will be immediately made with the person being called.

The pastor will send a letter of acceptance or decline of the call to both the congregation and the Office of the Bishop within thirty (30) days, unless otherwise agreed upon.

If the Pastor accepts the call

If the call is accepted, the president or vice-president of the congregation is responsible for completing the Letter of Call and "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities for a Rostered Minister of Word and Sacrament Under Call", including signatures of the president, secretary of the congregation, and sending them to the Office of the Bishop for the bishop's signature.

The newly-called pastor, along with the congregation council, will set the date when ministry will begin together. The president or vice-president of the congregation council will consult with the newly-called minister to determine when the acceptance may be publicly announced.

If the call is not approved by the Congregation

In the event that the call is not approved, the secretary of the congregation council will draft a letter/email to the candidate to report officially the results of the congregation meeting and to conclude the call process. The call committee chairperson shall also make personal contact with the candidate before the letter/email is sent. The Office of the Bishop will also be immediately notified. The Office of the Bishop will again search for suitable candidates to offer for interview.

If the Pastor declines the call

In the event that the pastor does not accept the call, the process will begin again with the Office of the Bishop offering a new slate of candidates to the call committee for interview.

Sample Questions for Interviews

- Tell us about a worship that you planned and led or describe your method of planning worship.
- Tell us about a time administering the sacraments was meaningful for you.
- Tell us about the most difficult sermon you ever preached.
- Describe how you have contributed to the quality of life for the most vulnerable in your community.
- Tell us about an act of service that was meaningful in your life.
- Tell us about a time when you were a leader and a time when you were not a leader.
- How would you describe your style of conflict?
- Tell us about a period in your life when you had to manage multiple demands in your work and how you determined priorities.
- Describe your approach to catechism.
- Describe your approach to (or philosophy of) youth (or children) ministry.
- Tell us about a time when you led your congregation in intergenerational ministry.
- Describe how you engage in life-long learning?
- What resources keep you theologically and Biblically current?
- Describe how you might help this congregation to practice evangelism in our daily lives.
- Tell us about the steps you are taking to minimize your own bias and increase your cultural competency.
- Tell us about a time when you encountered a culture other than the one you identify with.
- How might you help our congregation be committed to anti-racism?
- What steps do you take in helping others feel secure, trusted, and open with you?
- When stress mounts how do you care for yourself and remain an effective leader?
- What is the role of the Church in the world?
- Tell us about your participation in the work of the church beyond the congregation including synod, ecumenical, and para-church ministries.
- How might you help the members of this congregation be involved in their faith beyond the walls of this congregation?
- Describe your current vision for ministry and how you would help others in the congregation to catch that vision.
- Share a situation that was stagnant or failing and describe how you revitalized it.
- Tell us about your stewardship practices.
- Describe a time when you engaged others in the stewardship of their gifts.
- Tell us about some of the creative or innovative funding strategies you've tried.
- Describe your style of ministry to people in crisis.
- Describe how you have used the establishment of boundaries to strengthen your ministry.
- In your experience what are the differences between the role and the relationship of a pastor to their congregation?
- How do you assess your own professional limitations when ministering to persons in crisis?
- Describe your practice of accountability and goal setting for yourself.

- What role do you see the pastor fulfilling in the administrative responsibilities of a congregation?
- How do you see your role in relation to congregation council?
- Describe your philosophy of visitation and pastoral care.
- Why are you considering accepting this call?
- How do you see yourself involved in our community and our synod?
- Tell us about your spiritual practices.
- Tell us about your wellness practices.
- Talk about the ministry areas you like to do. Why?
- What pastoral roles give you the most trouble? Why?
- Discuss your strengths as well as those areas on which you need work.
- What are your expectations for yourself and lay persons in liturgical practices (worship)?
- Describe your preaching philosophy and style.
- Discuss your thoughts, expectations, and requirements concerning catechetical instruction.
- Discuss in detail your expectations (or philosophy) of and pastoral involvement in educational ministry (or evangelism, stewardship, benevolence, youth ministry, or social ministry).
- From your perspective, what were the areas in your last/current call which gave you personal satisfaction?
- Tell us about a time when you were responsible for managing others.
- Tell us your reflections on the structure of our staffing.
- Tell us about a time when you had a disagreement with a co-worker / congregation leader. how did you react? What was the conclusion of the disagreement? What did you learn? What would you do differently?

Example Questions for a Co-Pastor / Associate Pastor

- What are the essential things for maintaining a good and effective relationship with the senior pastor and other staff?
- Tell us about a time when you were unclear about direction from your supervisor or colleagues. How did you handle it? what did you like about your reaction and what would you do differently?
- [Assuming that the candidate has met with the senior pastor and the senior pastor is not in the room] After your meeting with the senior pastor how do you see your styles complementing each other? What do you see as the potential difficulties in your working relationship?
- [Who does the Assoc Pastor report to? Who does their evaluations?] What are your reflections on the structure of our staffing?

Example Closing Questions for the Interview

- What are two or three things that we should know about you that we didn't ask?
- Do you have any further questions that you want us to answer?

Possible Questions Candidates Might Ask

Remember that candidates will also bring their own questions to the interviews with you. They may not ask all of their questions in the initial interview. We encourage you to welcome questions from the candidate as this is an opportunity for you to see what kind of insight this candidate might bring. It will behoove your discernment for the committee to consider your answers to these questions in advance of the interview.

1. What do you think people like about this congregation?
2. What are some of the things you hope this congregation will do in the future that would benefit you? others?
3. What are some of the reasons why you are members of this congregation and not some other one?
4. What kind of organizations do you relate to?
5. What kinds of activities take place on a weekly/monthly basis?
6. How do you welcome and assimilate new members?
7. What plans has the council made for doing additional self-study and goal setting?
8. What structure of government does this congregation have?
9. What kind of benevolence do you support?
10. In what area(s) of social concern has the congregation been active?
11. What kind of priority do you give to the functions of a pastor, both in terms of importance and number of hours? What gets deferred if time runs out?
12. What view does the congregation have about continuing education? What about time off? financial support? Will the pastor be encouraged to attend the annual pastors' conference? Who will pay the expenses?
13. How does the pastor's family receive support? Are there expectations of the pastor's family?
14. Administratively, who prepares the council and congregational meeting agendas?
15. Who chairs meetings?
16. What are the housing opportunities in the neighborhood? What present financial arrangements have been made for the pastor's housing? Has the council and/or congregation envisioned any future ideas for the pastor's housing (shared equity, mortgage loan from the congregation, etc.)?
17. What is the school situation in this area?
18. (In the case of multiple-staff ministries) How do you describe the task divisions, lines of authority, conflict management and reporting methods for the pastoral staff, council, congregation and committees?
19. Describe what the community's image of the congregations is (if you can tell).
20. What hardships has the congregation experienced in the past? Have there been any major conflicts?
21. What is the attitude of the congregation toward the church at large? Synod? ELCA?
22. What are the possibilities for growth in size and involvement?
23. How many pastors has this ministry had in the past twenty years?
24. How is the pastor's leadership accepted by the congregation?
25. What kind of secretarial service will the congregation provide?