



**Florida-Bahamas Synod**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

# *Walking Together through the Transition Process*

## *A Guide for Congregational Leaders*



*“...for the sake of the mission and ministry of the church.”*

**The Florida-Bahamas Synod**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
3838 West Cypress Street  
Tampa, Florida 33607-4803  
(813) 876-7660  
[www.fbsynod.com](http://www.fbsynod.com)

July 1, 2020

***Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!***



Thank you for agreeing to serve your congregation as we walk together through the transition process. The process of locating and calling a new rostered minister for your congregation is an exciting time in the life of the church; however, it can also be challenging and, at times, lengthy. Martin Luther's Small Catechism reminds us that the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian Church on Earth..." It is this same Spirit who will be present to guide us as together we travel the road of pastoral transition. Therefore, it is important for you, your call committee, and for the entire congregation to continue to pray, fellowship, and worship together confident of the Holy Spirit's guidance in this time of transition and discernment.

In order to assist congregations in the transition process, my office has developed and packaged this manual to help make the process clearer for you. ***Walking Together through the Transition Process: A Guide for Congregational Leaders***, is designed to assist you in understanding the process, to guide you through the steps of the process, and to resource you with the necessary tools to successfully complete this process. For your convenience, this entire manual, including the forms, are available for download online at: <http://www.fbsynod.com>

As always, my staff and I are here to assist you in any way that we are able. I ask that you be in contact with Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership, Deacon Connie Schmucker. I also ask that you keep in touch with your Conference Dean who will serve as a wonderful resource during this process. A list of the Conference Deans with contact information and a map of the conferences in our synod can be located online at: <http://www.fbsynod.com>

Again, thank you for agreeing to serve in this important ministry of your congregation. I pray that God will give you strength, courage, and the blessings of the Holy Spirit as you and your congregation move through the transition process.

Peace be yours,

*Pedro M. Suarez*

The Rev. Pedro M. Suarez  
Bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod

---

# Table of Contents

---

Greetings from the Bishop

Introduction: The Transitions Process

---

Resource A: Overview of the Transition Process

Resource B: Transition Timeline Poster

Resource C: The Importance of Communication

Section 1: Current Pastor Resigns or Retires

---

The Resignation or Retirement of the Pastor

Receiving the Letter of Resignation

Farewell for the Pastor

Meeting to Review the Transition Process

Informal Closure Conversation with the Pastor

The Exit Interview

Alternative Paths

Congregational Consultation

Resource A: The Dynamics of Transition

Resource B: The Ethics of Pastoral Transition

Resource C: Thanksgiving at the Conclusion of a Call

Resource D: Possible Starter Questions for an Informal Closure Conversation

Resource E: The Exit Interview

Resource F: Certification of Congregational Records

Resource G: Guidelines for Retired Pastors

Section 2: The Interim Pastor Arrives: Discerning and Assessment Begin

---

Appointment of the Interim Pastor

Arrival of the Interim Pastor

Training and Role of Interim Pastors

Five Primary Areas of Focus for the Interim Ministry

Assessing Special Needs for Interim Ministry; Coaching

Transition Process Checklist

Calling of a Transition Pastor to Serve as Interim

Assessment Prior to Conclusion of Term Call

Interim Pastors and the Call Process

Saying Good-bye to the Interim Pastor

Resource A: Letter of Appointment for Interim Pastor

Resource B: Order of Welcome for the Interim Pastor

Resource C: Interim Pastor Report form

Resource D1: Congregational Sustainability Assessment

Resource D2: Transition Process Checklist

Resource E: Ministry Focusing Retreats I & II

Resource F: Two Retreat Options for Discerning Guiding Principles

Resource G: Early Assessment of Interim Assignment

---

*Resource A*  
*Overview of the Transition Process*  
*Florida-Bahamas Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

---

## **I – Current Pastor Resigns or Retires**

---

- The congregation council receives the written resignation of the pastor and notifies the Office of the Bishop of the resignation.
- The bishop or a representative of the Office of the Bishop meets with the congregation or council to provide an overview of the transition process. People from the congregation are welcome to attend.
- A farewell celebration for the pastor is planned.
- Closure conversations with the pastor are completed.
- The Office of the Bishop appoints an interim, who meets with the council.
- Interim Letter of Appointment completed.
- The pastor concludes ministry at this congregation; congregational records are certified, Ethics of Transition are received.

## **II – The Transition Period Begins**

---

- The interim pastor arrives to serve the congregation and is installed in worship.
- The council and the Office of the Bishop determine immediate needs of the congregation, usually including a ministry assessment/discernment.
- With the interim, the council and leadership work through the transition process checklist.
- Coaching as needed.
- The congregation addresses issues and concerns that need resolution prior to initiating the call process; updates constitution if needed.
- Financial documents for the congregation are sent in to the Office of the Bishop for review.



**Step 1:**  
Current pastor resigns or retires... A celebration of ministry together

**Step 12:**  
Evaluation of the process

**Step 2:**  
Congregation receives a transition pastor or interim.

**Step 11:**  
Installation

# Steps in the Calling of a New Pastor

Your pastor has resigned or retired...

**Step 3:**  
A Ministry assessment & discernment process occurs

*What happens next?*

**Step 10:**  
Congregation votes to extend a call; pastor accepts or declines call

These steps illustrate the process your congregation will experience.

(Introduction, Resource B)

**Step 4:**  
The call process begins... call committee is formed

**Step 9:**  
Congregation meets primary candidate

**Step 5:**  
Congregational Ministry Site Profile is created

**Step 8:**  
Primary candidate identified & interviewed by congregation council

**Step 6:**  
A Call List is formed

**Step 7:**  
Interview of candidates

---

## *Resource C*

# *The Importance of Communication*

---

Communication is always important to keep members of a congregation informed and together in mission and ministry. However, it becomes even more important during times of transition so that a consistent and accurate message is shared within the congregation and with potential candidates for the pastoral vacancy.

Who has the responsibility for communication in a congregation? Virtually everyone who has a role within the church to keep the ministry functioning. Primary responsibility for communication is held by elected church leaders, the congregation president in particular, as well as the call committee chairperson. The Interim Pastor may also help a great deal with the various avenues of communication. However, the Interim Pastor may be limited by whatever time arrangement is contracted with the church.

Why is communication important? The transition time is a special time of reflection, evaluation and assessment within the life of a congregation. It is a time to take stock of where the church's ministry has been and where God seems to be leading that ministry in the coming years. The Congregational Ministry Site Profile will help in focusing this work. But it should be understood from the outset that the ministry of the church is of the whole people of God who are called and gathered in this place, and therefore as many voices need to be heard within that process of reflection, evaluation and assessment as possible. This necessitates good communication for this process to be complete.

At the same time, the result of this process will be shared by the call committee with potential candidates for the pastoral vacancy, and every effort must be put forth to insure that what is communicated by the call committee, and successively by the congregation council, faithfully reflects everything that the ministry of the congregation is and hopes to be. Failure in communication at this stage can effect the whole call process and the future ministry of the congregation.

It is also the case that call processes take time and require patience. Regular and effective communication during that process between congregation leaders and the congregation will again help to keep people together and increase trust in the process and in the Holy Spirit's guidance during that process.

Levels of communication in a congregation are always in direct proportion to levels of trust between leadership and members. High levels of communication will always assist in bringing about high levels of trust.



---

## SECTION 1

# *Pastor Resigns or Retires*

---

### **The Resignation or Retirement of the Pastor**

---

When a pastor announces resignation or retirement as pastor of the congregation, it can be an emotional time for the congregation. Members and friends will experience a whole host of feelings depending on their particular relationship to the pastor, the pastor's ministry, and the pastor's family. The congregation needs to recognize these feelings and provide for an appropriate farewell celebration of the pastor's ministry.

The congregation council's leadership is critical during these early weeks following the announcement to ensure an appropriate farewell celebration and to assure the congregation that God's Spirit will provide the strength and direction needed during the time of transition. A helpful resource entitled *The Dynamics of Transition* is included at the end of this section. The early weeks in the transition period are to be devoted to saying "good-bye" well and offering Godspeed to the pastor and his/her family.

A copy of the very important resource, *The Ethics of Pastoral Transition*, is included with the resources of this section and is to be shared with congregational leaders, members of the congregation and the departing pastor.

### **Receiving the Letter of Resignation**

---

The Letter of Resignation should state the effective date of the resignation, normally about thirty days from the date of the letter. The effective date of resignation is the date after which the congregation is no longer responsible for the pastor's compensation, except in circumstances that involve severance agreements. The Letter of Resignation is presented to the congregation council and the minutes of the council should indicate that the resignation of the pastor has been received noting the effective date of the resignation. A pastor's resignation ends the pastoral relationship and it is unnecessary for the council to vote on the resignation; it is simply received. Both the pastor and the council president should be certain to inform the bishop immediately.

Copies of the Letter of Resignation may be sent to all members of the congregation by the pastor, or the council president may send a letter to all members of the congregation informing them of the pastor's resignation possibly enclosing a copy of the Letter of Resignation. The pastor and council should clarify the date of the last worship service to be led by the pastor, and how many weeks, if any, of the remaining time is accrued vacation time.

---

*Resource A*  
***The Dynamics of Transition***

*By the Rev. R. Richard Armstrong, LMFT, and the Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel*

---

### **What to Expect for Your Ministry**

---

Your pastor has resigned or retired. Suddenly it is a new day. It may have come unexpectedly. Or it may have been announced many months ago so that the congregation could prepare. In either case, the day that your pastor leaves, it is a new and changed situation. The transition has begun. Being in Transition means:

- An *Ending* has taken place.
- There is a *Time in Between*
- A *New Beginning* has not yet occurred.

Transitions are about the Time in Between. How do we experience these times?

Just as congregations are made up of a variety of people, so it is that people may experience the transition in a variety of ways. Transitions can be a time of joyful anticipation and planning for the new ministry to come (like Advent, like pregnancy). For others, it can be a period of anxiety and confusion because of the transitory nature of the period. Yet others will be working their way through the typical stages of grief over the loss of their pastor: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance.

In all cases, the time in between is a *changing situation*. The comfort and contentment of normal routine left with the last called pastor (= the *Ending*). Everything is in a state of *Becoming* prior to the *New Beginning*.

The Old Testament gives us a helpful example of transition in scripture in the story of the Exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to go to the Promised Land of Canaan. The Exodus was the *Ending*. The Wilderness Experience as the Transition, the *Time in Between*. And the Promised Land was the *New Beginning*. From these stories we learn that the promised new beginning is always filled with hope that aids transitions for the people of God.

We also learn from the Wilderness story that in God's hands, transitions can be *Transformational*. The Wilderness experience was a time of *re-forming* as a people of God (Ex. 6:7). It was a time for faith renewal and learning to trust God (Num. 14:20f). It was also a time of testing of that faith (Ex. 20:20). The Israelites came out of that wilderness strengthened as God's people.

It wasn't always easy however. The experience of the Wilderness for some included: frustration and dissatisfaction (Ex. 15:24), complaining (Ex. 17:3), uncertainty about the future (Num. 14:1-4), disillusionment with leaders (Ex. 16:2), even desires to "go back (Num. 14:4). That can occur for God's people in transition even today.



---

*Resource B*

# *The Ethics of Pastoral Transition*

---

Congregations and pastors need to understand the professional ethics of ministry relating to former pastors, interim pastors, current pastors and retired pastors. A pastor who resigns or retires from a congregational ministry setting no longer serves as pastor to members of this congregation. Former pastors should not agree to pastoral responsibilities that rightfully belong to the current pastor of the congregation.

**The PURPOSE of this paper is to clearly state the proper boundaries for former pastors, interim pastors, retired pastors, current pastors, and members of congregations relative to on-going pastoral responsibilities and duties.**

## **Former Pastors**

---

If a former pastor is asked to officiate at a special service by members, he/she should respond immediately by saying: “Thank you very much for asking me, but it is simply NOT appropriate for me to do that since I am no longer your pastor.” The former pastor then encourages them to call their present pastor.

It is very natural that members turn again to a former pastor who perhaps baptized their other children, or performed other weddings and funerals for family members while serving as the family’s pastor. Again, with great sensitivity and love, the former pastor should graciously decline and direct the family to their current pastor. As with other family friends, the former pastor might attend the service as a guest.

Former pastors should avoid the comment to members, “You’ll need to speak first to your present pastor about me doing this.” Such a comment places the current pastor in the very awkward situation of having to relinquish the pastoral role to the former pastor, or saying no to the members’ request and thus appearing insensitive, uncaring or insecure.

Former pastors who retire need to promptly transfer their membership to another Lutheran congregation where they can become involved as a retired pastor. This is also a great gift to the congregation formerly served.

In this age of extensive social networking on-line in its many forms, former pastors need to be aware and sensitive about their on-line communications. Continuing to “copy” members of their former congregation in emails or Facebook interactions is a form of continuing pastoral interactions/relationships. On-line interactions are to be discontinued. Be sure to remove past parishioners from your batch email lists and Facebook access.

---

*Resource C*

## *Thanksgiving at the Conclusion of a Call*

---

*This order is appropriately set within the service of Holy Communion on the final Sunday of a minister's service under call in a congregation. The order follows the prayer after communion. This order may be led by a pastor of the congregation (unless the pastor's call is the one concluding), another rostered leader, a representative of the congregation, or a representative of the synod.*

### **ADDRESS**

*The person whose call is concluding and representative/s of the congregation come before the assembly.*

#### **For a pastor**

*A representative of the congregation addresses the pastor whose call is concluding with these or similar words.*

*Name, on date of call, we of name of congregation called you to be pastor in this place: to proclaim God's word, to baptize and teach, to announce God's forgiveness, and to preside at the Lord's table. With the gospel you have comforted us in times of sickness and trouble, and at the death of our loved ones. Sharing our joys and sorrows, you [and your family] have been important to our life together in the church of Jesus Christ, in our service to this community, and in God's mission to the whole world. [As you leave this community of faith, we say farewell, and we pray for God's blessing.]*

#### **For a deacon**

*A representative of the congregation addresses the person whose call is concluding with these or similar words.*

*Name, on date of call, we of name of congregation called you to serve among us as a deacon. Here a description of the particular ministry may be included. Sharing our joys and sorrows, you [and your family] have been important to our life together in the church of Jesus Christ, in our service to this community, and in God's mission to the whole world. [As you leave this community of faith, we say farewell, and we pray for God's blessing.]*

*The leader addresses the assembly with these or similar words.*

People of God, members of *name of congregation*,  
do you release *name* from service  
as your *pastor / deacon*?

**We do, and we give thanks to God for our ministry together.**

---

*Resource D*

## *Possible Starter Questions for an Informal Closure Conversation*

---

This conversation is to celebrate and reflect upon the partnership and mutual ministry that the pastor and congregation have shared. Someone other than the pastor should lead the conversation monitoring the agreed upon time for this sharing. This conversation may take place with the council. If desired, a representative of the Office of the Bishop could be present and may facilitate the conversation.

The designated leader might also provide an opening devotion and closing prayer. The questions below are designed to help focus the conversation.

Some possible starter questions that might be asked of the members present:

- Which of Pastor's gifts are you personally most thankful for?
- Would you share a personal or special memory or event involving the pastor that has special meaning to you?
- Is there a humorous event or recollection, not too embarrassing, that you might share?
- How will the Pastor be remembered by you?
- What lasting treasure has the Pastor given to this congregation?
- Some possible starter questions that might be asked of the pastor
- What were some of your hopes & dreams for this congregation when you began your ministry among us?
- What was your greatest joy during your ministry here?
- Would you share your greatest sorrow or disappointment in your ministry?
- What accomplishments are you most proud of relating to your ministry here?
- What do you see as this congregation's greatest strengths?
- Any concerns or parting words of wisdom that you'd like to share with us?

---

## *Resource E*

# *The Exit Interview*

---

The Exit Interview is designed to assist the Office of the Bishop in gathering valuable information from the pastor that could be helpful to the bishop and the congregation for the transition time. A representative of the Office of the Bishop will initiate the interview with the pastor and may invite congregational representatives to be present as well. Information that is gathered that is not confidential will be shared with the council.

Name of Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Those participating in the Exit Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

### QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW

1. What do you regard as the most important accomplishments during your time as pastor of this congregation?
  
2. What has been your biggest challenges or disappointments?
  
3. What do you see as this congregation's greatest strengths?
  
4. What do you see as this congregation's greatest growth areas or weaknesses?
  
5. Where do you see this congregation's mission and ministry heading in the future?
  
6. Do you have any concerns about the congregation's current staffing situation?
  
7. Are there issues that you feel this congregation needs to address before calling a new pastor?

---

*Resource F*

## *Certification of Congregational Records at the time of Pastoral Transition*

---

**In accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Florida-Bahamas Synod which states:**

*“The pastor shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed or members excluded from membership” (S14.03.a), and further, “The parochial records of each congregation shall be kept in a separate book\* that shall remain the congregation’s property. The secretary of the congregation shall attest to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his/her hands in good order by a departing pastor before: a. installation in another field of labor; or b. the issuance of a certificate of dismissal or transfer.” (S14.15.)*

This certification testifies to the fact that the departing pastor has kept accurate parochial records, and that such records have been reviewed and found in good order by the secretary of the congregation.

Name of Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Departing Pastor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary of the Congregation Council

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This certification should be mailed to the bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod at 3838 West Cypress Street, Tampa, FL 33607. The departing pastor and the secretary of the congregation should retain copies of this certification.

\*Or electronic file.

---

## Resource G

# Guidelines for Retired Ordained Ministers

---

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

Persons who have served within the ordained ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and who have determined that they will enter retirement are not only to be honored for their past service but are seen as important resources for ministry within the life of this church. To enter this new phase of one's life is always a significant milestone. It is a transition into another important stage of life for every retired person. It is true also for the retired pastor (and spouse/partner if the pastor is so blessed). The following statement is a guideline for retired pastors, the congregations they served, and synodical bishops in understanding the new status of a retired pastor. It is intended to affirm the past ministry of retired pastors, to give directions which seek to avoid some pitfalls that can present themselves to the retired pastor, and to point to new arenas of service and support.

### **I. ROSTER OF ORDAINED MINISTERS**

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

### **II. CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

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

### **III. PASTORAL SERVICE**

At the time of retirement, a pastor is no longer pastor of a congregation and therefore must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in the congregation unless specifically authorized to do so. The service of retired pastors is governed by the *Constitution for Synods* [†S14.14.], which describes the role of ordained ministers in congregations in which they do not serve: "Ordained ministers shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the congregation Council" (†S14.14. in the *Constitution for Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*).

### **IV. INTERIM MINISTRY**

One area of potential service for the retired pastor is interim ministry. Many retired pastors provide valuable and needed ministry to congregations in time of transition following the resignation of a pastor. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America invites retired pastors to consider this important arena of ministry. A retired pastor may serve as an interim pastor during a time of pastoral vacancy only by the authorization of the synodical bishop. Retired pastors who wish to serve under call in an interim ministry must return to the active roster of ordained ministers.

### **V. COMPENSATION**



---

## SECTION 2

# *The Interim Pastor Arrives*

---

### **Appointment of the Interim Pastor**

---

The bishop is officially the pastor of a congregation in transition between called pastors. Soon after a pastor resigns or retires, a representative of the Office of the Bishop meets with the congregation council to determine the pastoral needs during the transition time and whether the interim pastor will be full-time or part-time. The bishop then appoints an interim pastor with the consent of the council or congregation. The interim pastor serves as an extension of the Office of the Bishop. A ***Letter of Appointment*** with the expectations and compensation agreed upon is completed and signed by the interim pastor, the council and the Office of the Bishop. A copy of this letter is included in the resources at the end of this section.

### **Arrival of the Interim Pastor**

---

The congregation may use the ***Order of Welcome for the Interim Pastor*** in the resources at the end of this section to welcome the interim pastor. The interim pastor has all the rights and duties of a regularly called pastor as noted in the constitution for congregations. The members of the congregation will look to the interim pastor to preside at all baptisms, celebrations of holy communion, weddings, funerals, and other rites of the church.

It is through the service of interim pastors that the bishop provides for the pastoral care of congregations that are without called pastors. The interim pastor makes regular reports to the bishop using the ***Interim Pastor Report*** form, included at the end of this section.

Sometimes due to the length of the transition time or the availability of interim pastors, more than one interim pastor will serve during the transition. Supply pastors are occasionally used to provide pastoral care prior to the arrival of the interim pastor. The interim pastor's letter of "Appointment to Interim Ministry" and progress with transition goals will be reviewed by the Office of the Bishop in consultation with the Interim Pastor and congregation council six months after the effective date.

### **Training and Role of Interim Pastors**

---

Interim pastors in this synod receive special training to serve in this important role. In addition to the training provided by the synod, many interim pastors are further trained through the Interim Ministry Network, which teaches many specialized skills for pastors serving congregations in transition. Interim pastors are pastors in good standing within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or other approved church body, and are often retired pastors.

While the interim pastor provides continuity for pastoral leadership and care, the role of an interim pastor is also different from that of a regularly called pastor. From the beginning of his/her service, it is known that the interim pastor's ministry is temporary (usually less than one year, and normally not exceeding two years). During the transition time, the interim pastor assists the congregation in addressing special tasks that will help strengthen the congregation's ministry as it prepares for the new pastor.



THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
**LETTER OF APPOINTMENT TO  
INTERIM PASTORAL MINISTRY**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

**IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.**

Our ministry comes from Christ through the Church and belongs to the whole people of God. The gospel calls all Christians to be ministers in word and deed. So it is the privilege of every Christian to be a steward of the gospel of God's reconciling love. The whole church ministers as it celebrates God's presence, shares in the Good News, cares for those in need, and witnesses to the power of God's love.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America recognizes the office of pastor. It also recognizes that there are occasions when parishes will need to be served by interim pastors while the parish is in the study or calling process. Keeping in mind the apostolic advice that all things be done decently and in order (I Cor. 14:40), the church provides for the appointment of interim pastors.

Accordingly, the Bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod of the ELCA appoints you to serve as Interim Pastor of:

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Effective date: \_\_\_\_\_, on the following conditions and mutual covenants. Progress to be reviewed \_\_\_\_\_ (6 months from effective date) by the Office of the Bishop in consultation with Interim Pastor and Congregation Council.

**We together, as Synod, Interim Pastor and Congregation,** during this interim, agree to address together the following items:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**You as Interim Pastor:**

- Preach and teach the Word of God.
- Preside at worship and administer the sacraments according to the practice of the Lutheran Church, not seeking to change the congregation's worship practices during the interim without concurrence from the Office of the Bishop.
- Provide pastoral care to all members of the parish according to the needs, visit as necessary, and uphold the congregation in prayer. Arrange for pastoral care needs to be covered in your absence.
- Within the agreed upon days of service, give pastoral leadership for the meetings, activities, and organization of the congregation.



---

*Resource B*

## *Order of Welcome for the Interim Pastor*

---

*At the first service in which an Interim Pastor leads worship,  
the following may be used after the prelude and prior to the beginning of worship.*

*President of the Congregation Council:*

People of God, the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ has been appointed by the Office of the Bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod to serve \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church as our Interim Pastor. (A description of duties and days may be inserted here.) We welcome him/her into our midst as a shepherd and guide for our ministry and thank him/her for his/her willingness to be with us during our time of transition. Let us together ask God's blessing's on Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ and upon the work that we will do together in Christ's name.

*The President or an Assisting Minister may offer the following prayer:*

A: Loving God, we thank you for sending this faithful pastor to be among us during this special time in the life of our church. And we ask that you would empower him/her with your Holy Spirit that his/her preaching and teaching may show forth your living presence, that his/her counsel might be blessed with wisdom and insight, and that all our work together may witness to the love of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

C: **Amen**

A: Pastor \_\_\_\_\_,

C: **We welcome you into our family, and pray God's blessing be upon you.**

*The Interim Pastor may wish to respond with a few informal remarks.*

*The service begins as is customary.*

---

*Resource C*  
***Interim Pastor Report***  
*Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA*

---

Report for Month(s): \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_      Date of Report: \_\_\_\_\_

Interim Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_      Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Interim Pastor's Phone: \_\_\_\_\_      Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_      City: \_\_\_\_\_

Cong Email address: \_\_\_\_\_      Church Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

- **Progress Report on the Five Primary Areas of Focus for the Interim Time:**

*1. Putting the congregation's history into perspective.*

*2. Claiming a clear identity in God's call and mission.*

*3. Supporting congregational leadership shifts and changes*

4. *Strengthening inter-relationship with the synod and churchwide*

5. *Deepening commitments to new pastoral leadership and the future*

- **Progress report on Interim Retreat (Living Lutheran-Daubert, Resource E or F):**

- **Additional concerns or updates for the Office of the Bishop:**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

***Please provide copies of this confidential report to the bishop, to the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership and to the dean of the conference. Retain a copy for your files. Attach copy of council minutes if helpful. This report is not copied to council.***

---

*Resource C*  
***Interim Pastor Report***  
*Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA*

---

Report for Month(s): \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_      Date of Report: \_\_\_\_\_

Interim Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_      Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Interim Pastor's Phone: \_\_\_\_\_      Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_      City: \_\_\_\_\_

Cong Email address: \_\_\_\_\_      Church Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

- **Progress Report on the Five Primary Areas of Focus for the Interim Time:**

*1. Putting the congregation's history into perspective.*

*2. Claiming a clear identity in God's call and mission.*

*3. Supporting congregational leadership shifts and changes*

4. *Strengthening inter-relationship with the synod and churchwide*

5. *Deepening commitments to new pastoral leadership and the future*

- **Progress report on Interim Retreat (Living Lutheran-Daubert, Resource E or F):**

- **Additional concerns or updates for the Office of the Bishop:**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

***Please provide copies of this confidential report to the bishop, to the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership and to the dean of the conference. Retain a copy for your files. Attach copy of council minutes if helpful. This report is not copied to council.***

Intentional Blank Page

Encourage the congregation to support the total ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, raising during your interim ministry the level of the congregation's commitment to mission support through the Synod.

- Be responsible for the recording of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, funerals, attendance at Holy Communion, and the maintenance of the membership rosters; and report the statistics of the parish promptly and fully, as requested by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- Agree not to make yourself available for call in this congregation.
- Agree not to be involved in the congregations' call process except by specific invitation of the Bishop. Your personal perceptions about future pastoral needs may be shared with the Dean and the Office of the Bishop.
- During this interim, on behalf of the Bishop you will give special attention to the five developmental tasks of interim ministry, the transition process checklist, and submit a monthly or every-other-month, report to the Deployed Staff, the Dean of the Conference, and the Bishop on the form provided for this purpose.
- Lead the congregation through the Five Transition Tasks of the Interim Pastor and schedule a visioning retreat as outlined in *Walking Together Though the Transition Process, A Guide for Congregational Leaders* (Transition Manual).

**The congregation is called to:**

- Receive the interim pastor, uphold the interim pastor in prayer, and accord the interim pastor love, respect, and good will.
- Look to the interim pastor to preside at all baptisms, celebrations of Holy Communion, and the rites of the church (marriages, funerals, etc.).
- Agree not to consider or invite the interim pastor to consider a call to the congregation.
- Compensate the interim pastor in the following ways:
  1. Salary of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to be paid: (circle one) weekly, bimonthly, or monthly.
  2. Provide living quarters with utilities paid, or a monthly housing allowance of \$\_\_\_\_\_, if applicable.
  3. Provide an auto allowance of \$\_\_\_\_\_ per mile to cover driving related to interim pastoral ministry. If not living in the community, costs of commuting will be handled as follows:  
\_\_\_\_\_.
  4. Provide a professional allowance of \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month.
  5. Provide for ELCA Pension and Major Medical coverage, if eligible and applicable, as follows:  
\_\_\_\_\_.
  6. Provide one week of vacation with full salary and benefits for every \_\_\_\_\_ weeks of interim ministry.

7. Reimburse expenses for travel and related expenses to attend the Interim Pastors Colleague Group.
8. Reimburse or pay directly for registration and expenses incurred in attending the annual Synod Assembly and the annual Conference on Ministry as the Interim Pastor.
9. Reimburse or pay directly for registration expenses incurred in attending ongoing FB Synod transition training for the Interim Pastor.

Please acknowledge in writing receipt and acceptance of the Letter of Appointment. As you consider this Appointment, may the Holy Spirit guide your response.

This appointment is made by and may be terminated by the Bishop. Either the Congregation or Interim Pastor may also terminate this agreement, after consultation with the Bishop. This appointment automatically terminates with the call of the new pastor, effective as of the date agreed on by the congregation and the Office of the Bishop.

Congregational contact person for any matters related to the Appointment: \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed:

For the congregation: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

For the Office of the Bishop: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Interim Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please send a copy of this form, when signed, to:

**Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership  
Office of the Bishop  
Florida-Bahamas Synod  
3838 W. Cypress Street  
Tampa, FL 33607**



# **Intentional Blank Page**

During the transition period, a congregation can reflect, renew, grow and learn about itself. Rather than simply a time to put everything on hold or maintain the “status quo,” the transition time is an opportunity for the congregation and interim pastor to do many things in preparation for the start of a new pastor’s ministry.

The interim pastor, along with congregational leaders, will assess attendance trends, finances and stewardship, congregational participation and attitudes, leadership and organizational need, personnel needs, spiritual needs and ministry needs, especially with an eye to seeing that everything is stable and functioning well so that when a new pastor arrives, that pastor can more ably assist the congregation in moving into their next significant phase of ministry.

This means that congregations may experience change as a part of the interim period. Certainly change has already begun with the departure of the previous called pastor. Further change that may occur during the interim will have a purpose, which is to set up the next ministry well.

Congregations are best prepared for such change when congregational leaders are open and communicative about any change that is coming and express support for the interim pastor who is working with them to prepare for the next ministry. (See also Dynamics of Transition Section 1, Resource A.)

## **Five Primary Areas of Focus for the Interim Ministry**

---

Helping to organize and frame the work during the interim period are the Five Primary Areas of Focus of the transition period.

### ***Putting the congregation’s history into perspective***

What a congregation becomes in the future is related to what it was in the past. The time of pastoral change is a good time for a congregation to reflect on and learn from its history and past behavior patterns under the tenure of its former pastors. Sometimes there exist unresolved issues that inhibit preparing for and building a new future.

### ***Claiming a clear identity in God’s call and mission***

The transition time is an opportunity for renewal. The congregation seeks to discover its identity as it comes from God and apart from the former pastor’s personality and style. This is a time for the congregation to take a realistic look at the image it has of itself as well as the image that the community might have of the congregation.

It is the expectation of the Office of the Bishop that early in the transition time and prior to the forming of a Call Committee, the interim pastor or an outside leader/facilitator **will lead the congregation in a Ministry Focusing Retreat**. The purpose of this retreat is to assist the congregation and council leaders to recognize the importance of God’s call as the motivation for their ministry, and to help everyone to better discern that call in order to follow God’s will and leading into the future of God’s own making for this congregation. The resources that follow this section give several options for the Ministry Focusing Retreat that will help with this purpose, although these options are not exhaustive. Of primary importance is understanding the current context of the congregation in determining what retreat format will best assist them to recognize God’s call in their midst and the future to which God beckons. Other options and names of leader/facilitators are available from the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership.

In tandem with the Ministry Focusing Retreat with the congregation, the congregation council will want to download and study the demographics data for their ministry area that is available at MissionInsite (<https://fbsynod.com/mission-insite>, Password ynef3). This data should be studied prayerfully and compared with any mission or vision statements or previous strategic plans that may have been developed. This review should include prayerful discernment around the question: What is the mission, ministry and future to which God is beckoning this congregation? Or put another way, what is

God's will for this congregation now and for the foreseeable future? The congregation council will want to have these questions answered and any adjustments made to mission/vision statements or strategic plans prior to the formation of a call committee, so that this committee may represent these to potential ministry candidates.

### ***Supporting congregational leadership shifts and changes***

As ministry emphases grow and assume new directions, shifts in leadership and decision making patterns may need to be made. Shared leadership, with both old and new leaders involved, is encouraged. Openness in process, clear expectations, empowering of volunteers and good communication within the congregation is sought.

### ***Strengthening relationships with the synod and churchwide expression***

The interim pastor is in a wonderful position to help strengthen the partnership between the congregation and the greater church. Congregational leaders and the interim pastor assist the congregation in dealing with past perceptions or experiences and in building new awareness of the mission of the greater church. The recent history of mission support and benevolence is also examined and strengthened.

### ***Deepening commitments to new pastoral leadership and the future***

The congregation participates in many activities to build consensus and excitement about the vision for the future. As the vision for future ministry develops, clarity of leadership style, gifts and skills desired in the next called pastor develops. Preparations are made for the arrival of the new pastor and the conclusion of the interim ministry.

## **Assessing Special Needs for Interim Ministry**

---

The congregation council works with the Office of the Bishop in determining special needs or issues that should be addressed during the transition period. These might include unresolved conflict, changing community contexts and demographics, a very long pastorate by the previous pastor, or a need to study and assess the viability, focus and nature of the congregation's future ministry.

To assist with this assessment, the interim pastor is asked to complete the "Early Assessment of Interim Assignment" tool in the first six weeks of arrival and submit it to the Office of the Bishop (Section 2, Resource G).

The Florida-Bahamas Synod has many resource materials and gifted resource persons to assist congregations. Trained coaches and consultants with specialized skills are available to work with council leadership and the interim pastor to address special areas of concern to assist the congregation in its journey towards a healthy and vibrant ministry. Coaches receive an honorarium and IRS rate mileage reimbursement from the congregation.

## **Congregational Sustainability Assessment & Transition Process Checklist**

---

The congregation council, with the guidance of the interim pastor, will gather information for the Congregational Sustainability Assessment form at the end of this section (Section 2, Resource D1). This form will assist leaders and the interim pastor to assess the situation of the congregation as it looks toward the future with regard to supporting the congregation's ministries and pastor. Although only a few persons may be assigned to gather the information for the form, the full congregation council with the interim pastor should discuss the results of the assessment.

The congregation council, with the guidance of the interim pastor, will work through the Transition Process Checklist (Section 2, Resource D2). This checklist covers several administrative,

financial and planning functions that should be reviewed to “put our house in order” in anticipation of a new ministry.

After completion of the Congregational Sustainability Assessment and the Transition Process Checklist, both should be submitted to the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership. A representative of the Office of the Bishop will review these and arrange a meeting to discuss them with the council. This meeting occurs prior to forming a call committee.

### **Calling of Transition (Term Call) Pastor to Serve as Interim**

---

In some situations, it may be determined in the consultation between the congregation council and representative of the Office of the Bishop that in light of special congregational circumstances it is desirable to extend a term-call to a transition pastor rather than appointing an interim pastor. The calling of a transition pastor provides for an extended interim situation that has a predetermined length of time or term, usually three years in length. As with interim pastors, the transition pastor serves as an extension of the leadership and pastoral care of the Office of the Bishop during the transition between the former pastor and the calling of a new pastor to serve the congregation.

In addition to addressing the five primary areas of focus of interim ministry, a transition pastor may be asked to assist the congregation and congregational leadership in placing particular focus on areas of need for the future vitality of the congregation including ministry assessments and visioning processes. Matters described above related to interim pastors also generally apply to transition pastors.

### **Assessment Prior to Conclusion of Term Call**

---

About six months prior to the end of the term-call of the transition pastor, an assessment meeting that includes the congregation council, the transition pastor and a representative of the Office of the Bishop is scheduled to determine preferred next steps. At this point, a decision may be made to recommend one of the following courses of action to the congregation:

- The goals/tasks of the transition period have been satisfactorily accomplished and it is recommended to the congregation that a call committee be appointed to begin the process for the calling of the next pastor to serve the congregation. The term-call of the transition pastor will reach its conclusion as previously determined.
- There remains significant work to be done regarding the goals/tasks of the transition period and it is recommended to the congregation that the term-call of the transition pastor be extended one additional year.
- The relationship between the transition pastor and the congregation has developed in such a way that the congregation desires to develop a mission site profile and give consideration to the potential of calling the transition pastor to serve as its next called pastor. The transition pastor also desires to explore this possibility and completes a Rostered Minister Profile. After review and at the appropriate time, a special congregational meeting would be scheduled to call the transition pastor as pastor of the congregation.

## Interim Pastors and the Call Process

---

The congregation council and the Office of the Bishop determine when the congregation is ready to establish a call committee and move forward into the call process. A representative of the Office of the Bishop, often the dean of the conference, will work closely with the call committee. While the interim pastor may assist with process questions, he/she is NOT to be involved with call committee meetings or the content of their work. The interim pastor is not to exert any influence on the congregation's selection of a new pastor.

The interim pastor is NOT available for call to this congregation, except as described in the third option above relating to a transition pastor. Before appointing a pastor to serve as interim pastor, the bishop shares with that pastor that the interim will not normally be considered for call to this congregation. The congregation and the interim pastor are reminded of this fact when the *Letter of Appointment* is signed.

## Saying Good-bye to the Interim Pastor

---

Most congregations establish strong bonds with the interim pastor during the transition period, and it can understandably be difficult to end this relationship when the new pastor has been called. For this reason, we encourage the congregation to provide a nice farewell for the Interim Pastor.

*A Litany of Farewell for the Interim Pastor* is included with the resources at the end of this section. A reception after the worship services is also a nice way to say good-bye.

# **Intentional Blank Page**

Retirement benefits provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through the Portico (formerly Board of Pensions), combined with Social Security benefits, are intended to provide adequate compensation to pastors in retirement. Therefore, there shall be no financial commitment by a congregation or agency to retired pastors or their spouses/partners.

- A. A retired pastor who is authorized to serve (not under call) in a congregation for a stated period of time and for pastoral services may be compensated according to compensation practices within the synod.
- B. The title of Pastor Emeritus has no official standing and carries with it no compensation or authorization for service or for other responsibilities.

#### **VI. CONSULTATION WITH SYNODICAL BISHOP**

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

*Adopted by the Church Council as policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, November 1998 [CC98.11.45].*

Intentional Blank Page



8. Are there any other issues that you feel the Office of the Bishop needs to know?
9. Have the following items been tended to:
- Listing of those who are sick or hospitalized? Who has this information?
  - Are there marriages or baptisms schedules? Who has this information?
  - Other continuing care issues? Who has this information?
  - Who will handle classes you have been teaching (catechism, Bible, etc.)?
  - Have you reviewed the congregational records, including the parochial records, with the secretary of the congregation and has the secretary signed the certification of this?

**Completed form is to be copied to the departing pastor and forwarded to the bishop.**

Intentional Blank Page

*The leader addresses the person whose call is concluding.*  
Name, do you recognize and accept  
the completion of your ministry with *name of congregation*?  
*Response:*  
I do, and I give thanks to God for our ministry together.

## **THANKSGIVING AND SENDING**

*The presiding minister leads the assembly in prayer.*  
Let us pray.  
Almighty God, through your Son Jesus Christ  
you gave the holy apostles many gifts and commanded them to feed your flock.  
You equip your people with abilities that differ according to the grace given to them,  
and you call them to various avenues of service.  
We give you thanks for the ministry of *name* among the people of God in this place.

You watch over our going out and our coming in:  
bless this time of ending and beginning.  
You surround your people in every time and place:  
keep us close in your love.  
You accompany your people in times of joy and times of trial:  
prosper all that has been done to your glory in this time together;  
heal and forgive all that has fallen short of your will for us.  
Help *name* [and *her/his* family] and all of us  
to live with courage and gladness in the future you give to us.

As *they* have been a blessing to us,  
so now send *them/us* forth to be a blessing to others;  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
**Amen.**

## **BLESSING**

*The presiding minister, or the pastor whose call has concluded, proclaims God's blessing in these or similar words.*  
The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.  
The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace.  
**Amen.**

*A sending song may be sung.*

## **DISMISSAL**

*The assisting minister may send the assembly into mission.*  
Go in peace. Serve the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

## NOTES ON THE SERVICE

This order may be adapted for use in settings other than ministry in a congregation.

At the conclusion of a call to a minister of Word and Service, Farewell and Godspeed may be used instead of this order. Farewell and Godspeed may also be used at the conclusion of a lay professional worker's time of service.

The bracketed words at the end of the initial address may be omitted when the person is continuing in the membership of the congregation. The address may be adapted as appropriate when this order is used on the occasion of the retirement of a rostered minister.

When a representative of the synod leads this order, the representative may address the person whose call is concluding and the assembly with these or similar words. This address may precede the blessing.

Your sisters and brothers in the *name of synod*  
and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
give thanks to God for the ministry you have shared.  
We promise you our continued support and prayer.  
Rejoicing in the blessings of God in this congregation  
and in the ministry of *name*,  
with hope in God's abundant grace in years to come,  
I announce that *name's* service as *position* in this congregation  
is now concluded.

From Sundays and Seasons.com. Copyright 2014 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.  
Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #24316.

Intentional Blank Page

## Interim Pastors

---

The interim pastor is the current pastor of the congregation until that time comes when the new pastor assumes the role of pastor and shepherd of the congregation. Whether part time or full time, the interim pastor should be contacted for all pastoral acts during the transition time. The former pastor should not be contacted by members to return to perform a pastoral responsibility during the transition.

## Current Pastors

---

Current pastors should speak as positively as possible of the ministry of former pastors even though their style and vision might be very different. The current pastor should never feel pressured to relinquish his/her pastoral role to a former pastor. When a current pastor feels it is appropriate and healthy to invite a former pastor to return to participate in a special occasion, worship or activity, he/she can certainly extend such an invitation.

## Retired Pastors Who Join a Congregation

---

Retired pastors who join congregations can be a blessing to the congregation. Retired pastors need to remember that they come with experience and gifts for ministry and may be asked to share such gifts at the invitation of the current pastor. Retired pastors need to be supportive of the current pastor. Should retired pastors have concerns about the current pastor, or feel they are unable to be supportive of the current pastor, they are to call the bishop rather than to share their unsupportive viewpoints with the leadership or congregation. It is strongly suggested that retired pastors and their spouses do not serve on council.

## Members & Friends of the Congregation

---

Members should avoid placing both the current and former pastors in awkward positions by seeking the pastoral services of a former pastor. Members should simply not ask for such favors from former pastors. By showing high regard to the current pastor, members affirm the significance of the pastoral office which was once held by the former pastor.

**If the congregation, council or current pastor experience difficulties with proper boundaries being maintained, the bishop should be contacted.**

**Please copy this paper and distribute as appropriate.**

But this was also true: At every turn in the Wilderness, God addressed the needs of his people (Ex. 15:25, 16:5, 17:6). Following and trusting God got them through the uncertainty of the Wilderness to the Promised Land (the *New Beginning*).

So it is that “during the transition period, a congregation can reflect, renew, grow and learn about itself. Rather than simply a time to put everything on hold, or maintain the ‘status quo’, the transition time is an opportunity for the congregation and interim pastor to do many things in preparation for the start of a new pastor’s ministry” (Section 2, Page 2).

That last phrase is key to understanding the focus for the interim period: doing “many things in preparation for the start of a new pastor’s ministry.” Like Advent, preparing for Christmas. Like pregnancy, preparing for that new and life-changing blessed event that is about to happen. The focus, including any changes that may occur, is preparation for the *New Beginning*.

For leaders of congregations, it is helpful in transitions to do these things: Stay focused on your vision. State and publish expectations for the transition time. Communicate widely. Call informal congregational meetings to discuss progress as needed. Expect to be challenged, but understand it for what it is: a changing situation in the state of becoming. Stay on course.

Always remember: No matter what happens, everyone will be OK! We are safe in our relationship with God through faith in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:37-39). The God who led the Israelites through the Wilderness to the Promised Land will also lead our congregation to the *New Beginning* of God’s own making.

Vacation time is intended to be used each year, and unless there is a prior agreement stating otherwise, the accrued vacation time is for the present year only. Education time is a benefit to be used during the time the pastor serves the congregation and normally is not a consideration at the time of resignation.

## **Farewell for the Pastor**

---

An appropriate farewell for the pastor and his/her family is of first importance. The council, or a task force appointed for this purpose, should immediately begin plans for the farewell celebration. This ceremony provides fitting opportunity for members and friends to celebrate the pastor's ministry to the congregation and community, and to share remembrances of special times and events. This may also be a time to provide members an opportunity to give a financial gift of appreciation to the departing pastor.

*The Liturgy of Thanksgiving at the End of a Ministry*, a resource found at the end of this section, might well be used at the pastor's final worship service with the congregation.

Because Synod Parish Deacons serve the pastor of the congregation, the deacons will lay their stoles on the altar during the pastor's last worship service. (Per Deacon Guidelines.) A prayer of thanksgiving for the Deacon's ministry may be offered at this time.

## **Meeting to Review the Transition Process.**

---

Upon learning of the pastor's resignation or retirement, a representative of the Office of the Bishop will contact the congregation council in order to schedule a meeting with the council and congregation to provide an overview of the transition process. This meeting is usually scheduled prior to the pastor's departure. At this informal gathering, the bishop or the bishop's representative shares what might be expected during the transition time with the council and interested members and friends of the congregation. The departing pastor may, or may not, be present at this meeting.

The resource manual, *Walking Together Through the Transition Process*, which provides valuable resources for the congregation, is presented and reviewed. While it is impossible to determine in advance how long the transition and call process will take, it is helpful to understand more fully desired accomplishments for this time. This can be a time of great discernment and renewal of vision for the congregation.

## **Informal Closure Conversation with the Pastor**

---

The leadership of the congregation and the pastor may find it useful and rewarding to have an informal time for reflection over the pastor's ministry. The council president, or other designated person, should first speak to the pastor about this possibility and the persons that the



pastor desires to be present. This informal conversation could include the pastor and a few congregational leaders, or the pastor and a larger number of leaders that might include the entire council. The preferences of the pastor should be honored.

This conversation celebrates and reflects upon the partnership and mutual ministry that has existed between the pastor and congregation. It may identify areas of growth and celebration as well as incidents of difficulty and pain.

A designated person other than the pastor should lead the conversation, monitor the time set aside for this sharing, and provide for an opening devotion and closing prayer. If desired, a representative of the Office of the Bishop could be present and could facilitate the conversation. The resource, *Possible Starter Questions for an Informal Closure Conversation*, is included at the conclusion of this section. The questions are designed to engage the pastor and the congregational leaders in the conversation.

## The Exit Interview

---

Prior to the pastor's departure, a representative of the Office of the Bishop will conduct an exit interview with the pastor. Representatives of the congregation may also be invited to participate in this interview. While similar to the closure conversation described above, the exit interview gathers important information for the transition time. As an ordained minister of the church, the pastor usually has considerable information and insights that are helpful to the bishop and the congregation as the transition period is entered. Information that is not of a confidential nature will be shared with the congregation council by a representative of the Office of the Bishop. A copy of *The Exit Interview* generally used by the Office of the Bishop is included in the resources at the end this section.

The Office of the Bishop also assures that the constitutional requirement that congregational records be reviewed and certified as accurate and in good order is met. The resource, *Certification of Congregational Records*, may be found at the end of this section.

## Congregational Consultation

---

In some circumstances, the congregation council or Office of the Bishop will determine that it would be helpful for the Office of the Bishop to provide consultation with the leadership of the congregation. This might be especially true if the pastor's departure was sudden and unexpected. It would certainly be true if the departure involved conflict or discipline.

The shape and form of this consultation would be agreed upon by the Office of the Bishop and the council. It could include multiple meetings that would involve congregational leaders and a large segment of the congregation. Sometimes the bishop will recommend specially trained coaches or consultants to facilitate the conversations and provide guidance through difficult circumstances. Such consultation is designed to help the congregation move forward

into the transition period and toward the calling of a new pastor. Additional information related to consultation will be found in Section 2 of this manual.

## **Alternative Paths**

---

We recognize that not all congregational systems are equal, and that a single process for transitions may not serve all congregations well. At the same time, we are mindful that even congregations that are relatively healthy will have group dynamics change significantly when pastors or other leaders depart. While this does speak to the importance of interim time, the transition process allows for at least two alternative paths:

**Healthy congregations**, identified by the bishop's office in consultation with the congregation in transition, may be able to move more quickly through some of the steps of the transition process once a pastor departs. The bishop's office will be responsible for helping congregations identify which steps can be worked through more quickly with more targeted interim milestones.

**Transitions while the pastor is still in place.** Some larger congregations, in consultation with the Office of the Bishop, may choose to do some succession planning that includes bringing on a second pastor who is a possible successor to the pastor. This may be a possible path in the transition process provided care is taken in defining what the transition will look like and providing opportunities for future discernment on all sides. Understanding that co-terminus situations are the norm and often the best arrangement for the congregation, succession planning would require an exception to the co-terminus policy through consultation with the office of the bishop and with ratification by the Synod Council upon an exception moved by the bishop.

Some congregations, after consultation with the Office of the Bishop, may wish to begin the transition process while the pastor is still in place but without bringing on any additional staff. The goal here would be to have the new pastor start as quickly as possible after the departure of the predecessor pastor. The bishop's office will develop a process that helps healthy congregations (and leaders) work through the check list and some of the transition tasks while the pastor is in place. Assessments and safeguards should be included to ensure that the work is done with integrity and independent of the overt influence of the existing pastor.

Some suggestions for good communication during the Transition Process:

1. Make use of the church newsletter or e-news on a frequent basis to report what is happening in the Transition Process at every stage.
2. Schedule regular Temple Talks at worship services by the congregation president as well as by the call committee chairperson to keep members informed.
3. Make use of regularly scheduled adult forums, committee and organization meetings to gather information for the Congregational Ministry Site Profile to increase participation in the life and mission and direction of the ministry.
4. Publish the results of the Congregation Ministry Site Profile in some form for purposes of accountability, increased ownership, and good communication.
5. Be sensitive to the need for confidentiality within the process of interviewing of candidates and reporting to the congregation. Take time to share with the congregation the reasons for maintaining confidentiality in the early stages of the interview process. However, do not confuse confidentiality with no communication. Reporting on the process and the stages of that process is important for the congregation's sense of well-being during the transition. Find effective ways of doing this without breaking the boundaries of confidentiality.
6. The Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership will normally make the Ministry Site Profile (MSP) for all congregations in transition openly available on the ELCA transition website. An exception to this might be when there is only one candidate, such as a first call situation, or other special circumstances.



Intentional Blank Page

- A representative of the Office of the Bishop meets with the council to review progress through the checklist.
- The council, interim and the bishop mutually agree that the congregation is ready to move forward with the call process.

### **III – The Call Committee is Selected**

---

- The council and the Office of the Bishop assent to the appointment/election of the call committee.
- A prayerful and careful process is begun to select a call committee that is representative of the congregation.
- The call committee is installed at a service of worship
- A representative of the Office of the Bishop meets with the call committee and a representative of the council may attend to review the call process and responsibilities of all.
- The chairperson, the secretary, the computer person, the communicator and chaplain of the call committee are selected by committee members.

### **IV – The Work of the Call Committee Begins**

---

- The call committee commits itself to faithful worship, prayer and regular devotions.
- The manual *Walking Together Through the Transition Process* is reviewed, and the call committee begins its responsibilities.
- Means for communicating, reporting and sharing information with the council and congregation are discussed and procedures developed.
- The call committee and the council agree upon a budget for funding the call process.

### **V – The Congregational Ministry Site Profile and Seven Reflections Document**

---

- The call committee reviews the process for developing the Ministry Site Profile & Seven Reflections (optional document) and determines ways that the council and the congregation will be involved in the process.
- Careful and prayerful time and effort is committed to the completion of the first draft of the Congregational Ministry Site Profile and Seven Reflections.

- The first draft is reviewed and approved by the Office of the Bishop for further editing prior to sending the approved draft to council.
- A representative of the Office of the Bishop will meet with the call committee and a representative of the council for a final review and further editing of the Congregational Ministry Site Profile and Seven Reflections.
- The final version of the Congregational Ministry Site Profile and Seven Reflections, which may include pictures and attachments, is approved by the council and shared with the congregation.
- The call committee electronically submits the Congregational Ministry Site Profile and Seven Reflections to the ELCA and forwards a copy to the Office of the Bishop for distribution to pastoral candidates.

## **VI – Pastor-Candidates Are Identified, A Call List Formed**

---

- The call committee identifies their interview questions and develops the interview plan.
- The call committee holds a practice interview with the interim, dean or neighboring pastor.
- The bishop and the assistants to the bishop begin consideration of potential candidates for the call list; normally, up to three candidates are identified as best possible matches. Names of self-nominated candidates may be given to the Call Committee in addition to the call list.
- A seminarian (first-call candidate) is presented on a single name call list after consultation with the call committee about such a possibility.
- The Office of the Bishop makes contact with the potential candidates for the call list to determine openness to considering a call to this congregation.
- The dean regularly communicates with the call committee chair to provide status updates about the formation of call list.
- The Congregational Ministry Site Profile and Seven Reflections is sent to the candidates; the candidates agree or decline to have their name placed on the call list.
- The process continues until a call list of interested candidates is formed.
- A representative of the Office of the Bishop personally delivers the call list to the call committee, reviews the interview process and interview covenant.
- This information, including the names of candidates, is confidential and is not to be shared outside of the call committee.

## VII – The Interview Process

- The call committee reviews the Rostered Minister Profile for each candidate on the call list carefully; the candidates are contacted within 48 hours and interview dates are set as early as possible. The Call Committee reviews the profiles on the additional list of self-nominated candidates and either adds the candidates to the call list or releases the candidates.
- The call committee ensures that all arrangements for the visit and interview are completed in advance of the visit.
- A similar format is to be used for each of the candidates. Using the guidelines and suggested questions provided in *Walking Together Through the Transition Process*, the call committee prepares for the interview.
- The interviews are conducted in a timely and confidential way by the call committee.
- Promptly, upon the completion of all the interviews, the call committee meets to identify the primary candidate whose name will be presented to the congregation council for recommendation to the congregation.
- By phone call, with e-mail or letter confirmation, the call committee thanks the candidates being released for their willingness to be considered for this call.
- Should all candidates be released from consideration, or should the council decline to recommend the primary candidate to the congregation, a representative of the Office of the Bishop meets with the call committee for review, and the process begins to form a new call list.
- Rostered Minister Profiles for released candidates are collected by the call committee chair and shredded.

## VIII – Calling the New Pastor

---

- After receiving the name of a primary candidate from the call committee, the council arranges to interview the candidate.
- Following the interview, the council president discusses compensation and benefits with the candidate, and negotiates the compensation package to be proposed to the congregation for approval.
- Following these conversations with the primary candidate, the council votes to recommend to the congregation the primary candidate for call as the congregation’s new pastor and votes to recommend the compensation package.
- A date is set for the primary candidate to return (with family) to meet the congregation.

- A copy of the proposed compensation package is sent to the Office of the Bishop for review.
- An additional date, other than the meet and greet day/weekend, is set for a special congregation meeting in consultation with the conference dean to assure that a representative of the Office of the Bishop can be present.
- Notice of the meeting is given to the congregation according to constitutional guidelines.
- By written ballot, the congregation votes on the recommendation to extend a Call to the candidate to become its new pastor. A 2/3 affirmative majority vote is required. If the congregation declines to extend a Call to the candidate, the candidate is notified of the decision, and a representative of the Office of the Bishop will meet with the call committee for review and to begin the process of forming a new call list.
- Promptly, the call documents are signed and delivered to the bishop for signature. The bishop forwards the call letter to the pastor who prayerfully decides about the Call.
- Within three to four weeks the pastor accepts or declines the Call. If the Call is accepted, the newly called pastor and the council president will contact a representative of the Office of the Bishop to schedule and initiate plans for an installation service. If the Call is declined, a representative of the Office of the Bishop will meet with the call committee for review and to begin the process of forming a new call list.
- A service of farewell is planned for the interim pastor.

## **IX – Welcome and Installation of the New Pastor**

---

- The congregation plans an initial welcome for its new pastor and his/her family. This may follow the services of worship on the pastor's first Sunday with the congregation.
- Plans for an installation service and formal reception are completed. Invitations are extended to the other Lutheran congregations in the conference, local clergy, community leaders, and others identified by the congregation or by the new pastor.
- The new pastor is officially installed by a representative of the Office of the Bishop at the Service of Installation. An appropriate reception follows.
- The call committee and the council are recognized and thanked at the installation service for their leadership during the transition process.



## **X – The Early Period of Ministry**

---

- The new pastor, members of the call committee and the congregation council are invited to share reflections and evaluations of the transition process with the Office of the Bishop.
- The bishop encourages the council and the new pastor to schedule a leadership retreat within three to six months of beginning ministry together. Other congregational leaders may be invited.
- The plan of the retreat should include a review of expectations and opportunity to discuss the congregation's mission and vision.
- The new pastor attends the Transitions Seminar for new rostered ministers hosted by the bishop and held the day before the yearly Conference on Ministry.

The Transition Process is Concluded!

### Section 3: The Call Committee is Selected

---

Readiness to Enter the Call Process

The Role of the Call Committee

Process for Forming a Call Committee

Resource A: Guidelines for Choosing Members of the Call Committee

Resource B: Installation of a Call Committee with Prayers for a Shepherd

### Section 4: The Work of the Call Committee Begins

---

The Experience of Serving on a Call Committee

The Importance of Communication

Confidentiality

Call Committee Expenses

Resource A: The Call to Ministry

Resource B: Thoughts on the Call Process from a Call Chair

Resource C: Discerning God's Will: The Basics of Discernment

Resource D: Five Devotions on Discernment from the Book of Acts

### Section 5: Developing the Congregational Ministry Site Profile and Seven Reflections on Ministry and Context

---

Developing the Congregational Ministry Site Profile (MSP)

Some Valuable Benefits of Completing the MSP and Seven Reflections

Part I: Develop the Ministry Site Profile

Surveying the Congregation

Putting Together the Survey

Tabulation of the Survey Results

Early Drafts of the Profile

The Final Draft of the Congregational Ministry Site Profile

Part II: Develop Seven Reflections on Ministry and Context

Resource A: Suggested Cover Letter for the Survey

Resource B: Sample page from the Ministry Site Profile

Resource C: Seven Reflections on Ministry and Context

### Section 6: Pastoral Candidates and the Call List

---

Sources of Names for Potential Candidates

Developing the Call List

When Members & Friends Lift Up Names of Potential Pastoral Candidates

Self-Nomination by Pastors of the Synod

First Call Candidates

Filling Rostered Positions in a Multi-Staff Setting

Calling an Associate or Assistant Pastor

Resource A: Team Ministry Calls

## Section 7: The Interview Process

---

- Receiving the Call List
- Setting Up the Interview Dates and Process
- Confirming the Interview and Arrangements
- Hosting the Candidates
- A Practice Interview
- The Interview Site
- Planning the Interview
- Conducting the Interview
- Reflections on the Interview
- Selecting the Primary Candidate
- No Candidate Selected
- Follow-up Contact with Each Candidate Released
- A Pastor Withdraws from the Process
- The Primary Candidate
  - Resource A: Interview Covenant: Call Committee
  - Resource B: Questions a Call Committee May Ask
  - Resource C: Questions Candidates May Ask
  - Resource D: Sample Letter for Release of Candidate

## Section 8: Meeting and Calling a New Pastor

---

- The Council Receives the Recommendation
- The Council's Initial Meeting with the Primary Candidate
- When the Council Declines to Recommend
- Compensation Package
- Congregation Reception to Meet the Candidate
- Sharing Information about the Primary Candidate
- Setting Up the Congregation Meeting
- Voting Members
- The Congregation Meeting
- Preparing the Letter of Call
- Notifying the Pastor of the Congregation's Decision
- The Pastor's Response to the Call
- When a Call is not Extended or Accepted
- Reviewing the Call Process: The Spirit's Leading
  - Resource A: Interview Covenant – Congregation Council
  - Resource B 1/2/3: Definition of Compensation and Benefits
    - Steps for Completion of the Compensation Form
  - Resource C: Notes and Outline for a Congregational Meeting to Call a Pastor
  - Resource D: A sample "Letter of Call"
  - Resource E: Sample Letter Informing Pastor of Call
  - Resource F: Sample Letter Informing Pastor Call Was Not Extended
  - Resource G: Pastor's Salary and Benefits and Balancing Congregational Budgets

## Section 9: Welcoming the Congregation's New Pastor

---

- Preparation for Welcoming the Pastor
- The Pastor's Move to a New Home
- A Farewell for the Interim Pastor
- Scheduling and Planning the Installation Service
- The Reception
- Invitations
- Communications and Press Releases
  - Resource A: Sample Invitation to the Installation Service
  - Resource B: Order of Farewell to Interim Pastor

## Section 10: The Early Ministry

---

- Transition Team for the New Pastor
- Post Call Retreat
- Reflecting on the Transition Process
- A Gathering for New Pastors
  - Resource A: Reflections on the Transition Process
  - Resource B: Expectations of the Bishop's Office for Rostered Ministers of the Florida-Bahamas Synod

## Section 11: Additional Resources

---

- Mission, Vision & Values Statement
- Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline Summary
- A Summary of the Policy on Sexual Ethics Related to Sexual Misconduct In Ministry
- Keeping the Church a Safe and Sacred Place for All – Responding to Sexual Misconduct
- A Safe Place for God's Children
- Enrich & Transform: Welcoming LGBTQ Candidates into the Call Process

---

*Resource D1*  
**Congregational Sustainability Assessment**

---

*The following form should be filled out by the elected congregational leadership and the results discussed by the congregational council when completed.*

**SUSTAINABILITY: FACILITIES**

**I. BUILDING AGE & MAINTENANCE**

1. In what year(s) were your parish buildings constructed?

Sanctuary \_\_\_\_\_ Parish Hall \_\_\_\_\_

Other buildings & dates: \_\_\_\_\_

2. HVAC & other major systems are new or have been replaced within the last 10 yrs. Y  N
3. If our sanctuary A/C (or other major system) failed next week, we would have the funds on hand to replace it? Y  N
4. Such an expense would pose a financial crisis for our congregation. Y  N
5. Think back to the last major maintenance need (new roof, new windows, new a/c etc.):
- a. What was the repair needed? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. How were the needed funds secured? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. How did the congregation respond? \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Is it realistic to expect the same response/resolution when the next major maintenance need arises? Y  N
6. Based on our answers above, do we see our Building Age & Maintenance as a strength or a weakness for our sustainability as a congregation?  **Strength**  **Weakness**



15. We have a congregational/ endowment/memorial fund. Y  N
- a. If yes, we have withdrawn \$ \_\_\_\_\_ from it to pay regular ministry expenses within the past 12 months.
16. We receive financial gifts by: *(check all that apply)*
- Through passing around offering plates/baskets in worship
  - Providing and promoting online giving, giving at kiosks, etc.
  - Providing and promoting gifts through estate planning, trusts, stock gifts, etc.
17. How much mission support do we provide to/through our Synod and the ELCA for new ministries and churches and pastoral training?
- We don't provide any mission support to the Synod or ELCA
  - Less than 5% of our annual budget
  - 5-10% of our budget
  - More than 10% of our budget
18. Based on our answers above, do we see our Financial Stewardship as an Opportunity or a Threat for our sustainability as a congregation?
- Opportunity** *(we have the capacity to increase our giving)*
  - Threat** *(we are maxed out on our giving capacity and could be in jeopardy)*

#### IV. PASTORAL COMPENSATION

19. We are able to provide a full-time "Defined Compensation" *(does not include medical or pension)* to our pastor that is equal to or greater than synod guidelines *(See "Compensation Guidelines Worksheet" at FBSynod.com/rosteredministers)?* Y  N
- a. If not, what is the level of "Defined Compensation" we are able to provide our pastor based on our recent actual giving numbers? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
20. We are currently able to provide full benefits coverage *(full family health, disability, retiree support)*, and at least 10% pension to our pastor based on the "Defined Compensation" *(see the Portico Benefits Calculator tool at <https://employerlink.porticobenefits.org/Resources/Calculators/BenefitsCostCalculator>)?* Y  N
- a. If not, what level of benefit coverage are we able to provide our pastor? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
21. We are able to provide continuing education, professional expenses and mileage reimbursement to our pastor. Y  N
22. Based on our answers above, do we see our ability to support Pastoral Compensation as a strength or a weakness for our sustainability as a congregation?
- Strength**     **Weakness**

## SUSTAINABILITY: PEOPLE

### V. LEADERSHIP

23. We regularly have enough people to serve on Council. Y  N
24. We regularly have enough people to serve on committees. Y  N
25. We regularly have enough people to lead the most important ministries we do. Y  N
26. Based on our answers above, do we see our Leadership as a strength or a weakness for our sustainability as a congregation?  **Strength**  **Weakness**

### VI. WORSHIP

27. We have enough people to help with weekly worship preparations and assistance. Y  N
28. What has our average worship attendance been for the last 5 years? (*See your Annual Reports or the "Full Trend Report" for your congregation at <http://www.elca.org/tools/findacongregation>*)
- 1 yr ago \_\_\_\_\_ 2 yrs ago \_\_\_\_\_ 3 yrs ago \_\_\_\_\_ 4 yrs ago \_\_\_\_\_ 5 yrs ago \_\_\_\_\_
29. Based on these numbers, our congregation is  Growing  Holding Steady  Declining
30. Based on our answers above, do we see our Worship as a strength or a weakness for our sustainability as a congregation?  **Strength**  **Weakness**



## CALCULATING OUR SUSTAINABILITY

Enter below how we identified the following for our sustainability as a congregation in the sections above.

### FACILITIES

- I. Building age and maintenance       **Strength**       **Weakness**  
 II. Current building usage       **Opportunity**       **Threat**

### FINANCES

- III. Financial Stewardship       **Opportunity**       **Threat**

- IV. Pastoral Compensation       **Strength**       **Weakness**

### PEOPLE

- V. Leadership       **Strength**       **Weakness**

- VI. Worship       **Strength**       **Weakness**

*Congregations need resources to sustain ministry. The three primary resources include facilities, financial and people. Reflect on what you filled out above. Then use the following questions to estimate your sustainability.*

	Declined to not sustainable	Declining but still sustainable	Maintaining	Growing or Increasing	Copy number
<b><i>Do you have what you need to maintain or expand ministry in these areas:</i></b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Facilities Capacity</b> – maintainability and usage of facilities					
<b>Financial Resources</b> – to pay for facility, staffing, ministries, etc.					
<b>People Power</b> – to provide leadership, strengthen and sustain one another					
<b>Write the lowest number here:</b>					

*Since people, financial resources and facilities are necessary for sustainability, the lower number represents the “weakest link” in your congregation’s sustainability chain.*

*After reviewing this assessment with the congregational council, **return this form along with the completed Transition Process Checklist** (Section 2, Resource D2) **to the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership.***

# **Intentional Blank Page**

---

*Resource D1*  
**Congregational Sustainability Assessment**

---

*The following form should be filled out by the elected congregational leadership and the results discussed by the congregational council when completed.*

**SUSTAINABILITY: FACILITIES**

**I. BUILDING AGE & MAINTENANCE**

1. In what year(s) were your parish buildings constructed?

Sanctuary \_\_\_\_\_ Parish Hall \_\_\_\_\_

Other buildings & dates: \_\_\_\_\_

2. HVAC & other major systems are new or have been replaced within the last 10 yrs. Y  N
3. If our sanctuary A/C (or other major system) failed next week, we would have the funds on hand to replace it? Y  N
4. Such an expense would pose a financial crisis for our congregation. Y  N
5. Think back to the last major maintenance need (new roof, new windows, new a/c etc.):
- a. What was the repair needed? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. How were the needed funds secured? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. How did the congregation respond? \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Is it realistic to expect the same response/resolution when the next major maintenance need arises? Y  N
6. Based on our answers above, do we see our Building Age & Maintenance as a strength or a weakness for our sustainability as a congregation?  **Strength**  **Weakness**



15. We have a congregational/ endowment/memorial fund. Y  N
- a. If yes, we have withdrawn \$\_\_\_\_\_ from it to pay regular ministry expenses within the past 12 months.
16. We receive financial gifts by: *(check all that apply)*
- Through passing around offering plates/baskets in worship
  - Providing and promoting online giving, giving at kiosks, etc.
  - Providing and promoting gifts through estate planning, trusts, stock gifts, etc.
17. How much mission support do we provide to/through our Synod and the ELCA for new ministries and churches and pastoral training?
- We don't provide any mission support to the Synod or ELCA
  - Less than 5% of our annual budget
  - 5-10% of our budget
  - More than 10% of our budget
18. Based on our answers above, do we see our Financial Stewardship as an Opportunity or a Threat for our sustainability as a congregation?
- Opportunity** *(we have the capacity to increase our giving)*
  - Threat** *(we are maxed out on our giving capacity and could be in jeopardy)*

#### IV. PASTORAL COMPENSATION

19. We are able to provide a full-time "Defined Compensation" *(does not include medical or pension)* to our pastor that is equal to or greater than synod guidelines *(See "Compensation Guidelines Worksheet" at FBSynod.com/rosteredministers)?* Y  N
- a. If not, what is the level of "Defined Compensation" we are able to provide our pastor based on our recent actual giving numbers? \$\_\_\_\_\_
20. We are currently able to provide full benefits coverage *(full family health, disability, retiree support)*, and at least 10% pension to our pastor based on the "Defined Compensation" *(see the Portico Benefits Calculator tool at <https://employerlink.porticobenefits.org/Resources/Calculators/BenefitsCostCalculator>)?* Y  N
- a. If not, what level of benefit coverage are we able to provide our pastor? \$\_\_\_\_\_
21. We are able to provide continuing education, professional expenses and mileage reimbursement to our pastor. Y  N
22. Based on our answers above, do we see our ability to support Pastoral Compensation as a strength or a weakness for our sustainability as a congregation?
- Strength**     **Weakness**

## SUSTAINABILITY: PEOPLE

### V. LEADERSHIP

23. We regularly have enough people to serve on Council. Y  N
24. We regularly have enough people to serve on committees. Y  N
25. We regularly have enough people to lead the most important ministries we do. Y  N
26. Based on our answers above, do we see our Leadership as a strength or a weakness for our sustainability as a congregation?  **Strength**  **Weakness**

### VI. WORSHIP

27. We have enough people to help with weekly worship preparations and assistance. Y  N
28. What has our average worship attendance been for the last 5 years? (*See your Annual Reports or the "Full Trend Report" for your congregation at <http://www.elca.org/tools/findacongregation>*)
- 1 yr ago \_\_\_\_\_ 2 yrs ago \_\_\_\_\_ 3 yrs ago \_\_\_\_\_ 4 yrs ago \_\_\_\_\_ 5 yrs ago \_\_\_\_\_
29. Based on these numbers, our congregation is  Growing  Holding Steady  Declining
30. Based on our answers above, do we see our Worship as a strength or a weakness for our sustainability as a congregation?  **Strength**  **Weakness**

## CALCULATING OUR SUSTAINABILITY

Enter below how we identified the following for our sustainability as a congregation in the sections above.

**FACILITIES**

- I. Building age and maintenance  **Strength**  **Weakness**
- II. Current building usage  **Opportunity**  **Threat**

**FINANCES**

- III. Financial Stewardship  **Opportunity**  **Threat**
- IV. Pastoral Compensation  **Strength**  **Weakness**

**PEOPLE**

- V. Leadership  **Strength**  **Weakness**
- VI. Worship  **Strength**  **Weakness**

Congregations need resources to sustain ministry. The three primary resources include facilities, financial and people. Reflect on what you filled out above. Then use the following questions to estimate your sustainability.

	Declined to not sustainable	Declining but still sustainable	Maintaining	Growing or Increasing	Copy number
<b><i>Do you have what you need to maintain or expand ministry in these areas:</i></b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Facilities Capacity</b> – maintainability and usage of facilities					
<b>Financial Resources</b> – to pay for facility, staffing, ministries, etc.					
<b>People Power</b> – to provide leadership, strengthen and sustain one another					
<b>Write the lowest number here:</b>					

Since people, financial resources and facilities are necessary for sustainability, the lower number represents the “weakest link” in your congregation’s sustainability chain.

After reviewing this assessment with the congregational council, **return this form along with the completed Transition Process Checklist** (Section 2, Resource D2) **to the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership.**



# *Transition Process Checklist*

## *For Congregations*

### **Leadership Information**

**Congregation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interim Pastor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Dean:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Worship:** Average annual worship attendance: \_\_\_\_\_

High Season: \_\_\_\_\_ Low Season: \_\_\_\_\_

Worship service time(s) and styles(s):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



<b>TRANSITION PROCESS CHECKLIST</b> (Seek to complete <i>before</i> forming a call committee)		
<b>Suggested documents are available at <a href="http://www.fbsynod.com/resources">www.fbsynod.com/resources</a>.</b>		
<b>Administrative</b>		Checkbox
Date Completed ____/____/____	1. Reviewed “ <i>Walking Together through the Transition Process</i> ” Transition Manual ( <a href="http://fbsynod.com/resources/transitions">fbsynod.com/resources/transitions</a> )	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	2. Council orientation “ <i>Administrative Handbook for Councils</i> ” ( <a href="http://fbsynod.com/resources/transitions">fbsynod.com/resources/transitions</a> )	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	3. Membership roster updated	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	4. Electronic Parish Register data backed up and a regular back up process in place.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	5. “ <i>Policy on Sexual Ethics Related to Sexual Misconduct in Ministry</i> ” reviewed with leadership. (Section 11: Additional Resources)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	6. “ <i>Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline</i> ” reviewed with leadership. ( <a href="http://fbsynod.com/resources/transitions">fbsynod.com/resources/transitions</a> )	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	7. Annual congregational (Parochial) report filed with the ELCA. Who, in addition to pastor, is responsible for submitting form?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	8. Congregation’s constitution is updated with most recent ELCA amendments to the Model Constitution and is submitted to Assistant to the Bishop for Administration for review and approval by Synod Council. (See <a href="http://elca.org/About/Churchwide/Office-of-the-Secretary/Constitutions">elca.org/About/Churchwide/Office-of-the-Secretary/Constitutions</a> for the latest amendments)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	9. Website reviewed, updated, and maintained	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	10. Membership/visitor email database current.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	11. Building: Risk management/safety/repairs/insurance review	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	12. Reviewed “ <i>Enrich and Transform: Welcoming LGBTQ Candidates into the Call Process</i> ” ( <a href="http://fbsynod.com/resources/transitions">fbsynod.com/resources/transitions</a> )	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	13. Reviewed “ <i>A Safe Place for All God’s Children</i> ” (Section 11: Additional Resources)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	14. “ <i>Keeping the Church a Safe and Sacred Place for All, Responding to Sexual Misconduct</i> ” brochure reviewed and displayed. (Section 11: Additional Resources)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Date Completed ____/____/____	15. Disaster Response Plan for the facility.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	16. Disaster Response Plan for congregation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	17. MissionInsite demographic data downloaded by congregation council for use in call process ( <a href="https://fbsynod.com/mission-insite">https://fbsynod.com/mission-insite</a> Password: ynef3)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	18. MissionInsite studied and discussed by congregation council regarding mission and ministry planning prior to call process. (Section 11: Additional Resources)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Financial</b>		
Date Completed ____/____/____	1. Mission Support Date reviewed: ____/____/____ Contribution interval: _____ Percentage of budget: _____%	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	2. Mission Support Covenant Form submitted to Synod Office (Due Jan. 31)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	3. Who, in addition to pastor, is responsible for submitting the Mission Support Covenant Form?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	4. Compensation Guidelines reviewed with the council. ( <a href="https://fbsynod.com/resources/transitions">fbsynod.com/resources/transitions</a> )	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	5. Stewardship program reviewed and conducted/ongoing.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	6. Books audited/budget reviewed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	7. Send in congregational financial reports to the Assistant to the Bishop for Administration, and the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership. Financials will be reviewed to ensure congregation's ability to fund a pastoral compensation package according to Compensation Guidelines and address provision for future sabbatical.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	8. Endowment plan reviewed or explored.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	9. Mission Investment Fund Investments thoroughly reviewed or explored.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Date Completed ____/____/____	10. Conducted a Ministry Focusing Retreat with the congregation utilizing _____ as Leader/Facilitator	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Key Ministry Planning Areas</b> The items below are listed for discussion and ongoing action. Materials and resources noted are useful examples among many.		
	1. Engaged with the Office of the Bishop for the Congregational Vitality Emphasis (fbsynod.com/vitality)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Review the Alban Institute book: “ <i>Discerning Your Congregation’s Future</i> ” by Ray Oswald. Study chapters as needed. (Synod Resource Center)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Regular leadership orientation/training: “ <i>Administrative Handbook for Congregation Councils</i> ” (fbsynod.com/resources/transitions)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Regular and continuing evaluation of the vision among the leadership/congregation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes { } No { }	5. This congregation has developed a strategic plan for the coming years.	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Return this form and the Congregational Sustainability Assessment (Section 2, Resource D1) to the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership:**

1. By Email with attachments, or
2. By regular mail to:

**Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA**  
**Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership**  
**3838 W. Cypress Street**  
**Tampa, FL 33607-4803**

# Ministry Focusing Retreat I

*Resources by T.L. Weitzel*

*PowerPoints available for pastors in Interim Resources file*

## SATURDAY

- 9:00 a.m. Opening Devotion
- 9:15 a.m. Introductions – Joys & Concerns about Our Ministry
- 10:00 a.m. What Motivates Ministry? It's About Call
- 11:00 a.m. BREAK
- 11:15 a.m. Your Will Be Done: Listening for Call, Listening for God
- 12:15 p.m. LUNCH
- 1:00 p.m. Finding New Direction for Ministry
- 2:45 p.m. Next Steps
- 3:00 p.m. Closing Prayer

# Ministry Focusing Retreat II

*Resources by T.L. Weitzel*

*PowerPoints available for pastors in Interim Resources file*

## SATURDAY

- 9:00 a.m. Opening Devotion
- 9:15 a.m. Introduction -- Goals for the Day  
The Dynamics of Transition: What to Expect for Ministry
- 10:15 a.m. BREAK
- 10:30 a.m. What Motivates Ministry? It's About Call
- 11:45 a.m. LUNCH
- 12:30 p.m. Your Will Be Done: Listening for Call, Listening for God
- 1:15 p.m. BREAK
- 1:30 p.m. Group Process: Discerning Core Values
- 3:00 p.m. Closing Prayer

# **Intentional Blank Page**

# Two More Ministry Focusing Retreat Options

## A Five-Step *How To* Process for Discerning Your Congregation's Guiding Principles

### 1. What are Guiding Principles?

Guiding Principles are (See p. 90, *Living Lutheran* by David Daubert):

- Directly related to the biblical values of Jesus and God's vision for the church in mission
- Only meaningful in context of God's purpose
- Articulated in ways that will be helpful in making decisions on the journey
- Clear enough and few enough to be helpful
- Ideals to which the community agrees to be held accountable. They may conflict with current practice.

\*Guiding Principles articulate the things we need to remember and be accountable for in living out our purpose. (p. 67, *Living Lutheran*)

\*A congregation with a purpose and Guiding Principles must live them out by engaging the world around it. (p. 81, *Living Lutheran*)

\*When something comes along that distracts you from your purpose, you now have a reason to say, "no." But when God sends an opportunity to be the bearer of a "kingdom moment," you also have the clarity to help you say, "yes." (p. 82, *Living Lutheran*)

### 2. Review Purpose Statement in depth

Talk about what each phrase means.

Talk about what each word means.

What new behaviors are required to be faithful to your purpose statement?

### 3. Pray to be open to God's will and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Did you know that the **Holy Spirit** is mentioned over 40 times in the book of Acts, more than any other book of the Bible? The Holy Spirit is critical in the development of the Church, back then and also today. **Pray to be open to God's will and the movement of the Holy Spirit** in your decisions about Guiding Principles.

Guiding Principles:

- Are written in the present tense
- Are claimed as a desired behavior/a way of acting
- Require a specific way of acting- act like God is watching and Jesus is sitting next to you

Review your notes from Acts 2, 10, 16. In small groups, re-read Acts 2, 10, 16 and dig even deeper into the text, seeking biblical guiding principles/core values. Write your answer to these questions on newsprint.

What major decisions/choices did people of faith make?

What values or principles were they using to make those decisions? Make a list of all the key values you see in action. Do not rank. Discuss. Make a list of five most important biblical values.

Have each group share their five.

Post the small lists of Guiding Principles.

### 4. Silently pray for 10 minutes. Reflect on the small group's lists of Guiding Principles.

Negotiate from the three lists, the congregation's five Guiding Principles.

### 5. Celebrate your new guiding principles.

Based on *Living Lutheran: Renewing Your Congregation*, by the Rev. Dr. Dave Daubert and adapted by the Rev. Dr. Laurie Skow-Anderson

## Alternate Guiding Principles (Core Values) Process

**Step 1:** Prayerfully consider the following. What is God's will for your congregation? Consider what God might want for your congregation, not what you want.

**Step 2:** Rate each of the Guiding Principles/Core Values below from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least important and 5 the most important.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| __1. Bible-centered preaching/teaching            | __13. Community outreach                             |
| __2. Every member engaged in ministry             | __14. Strong Christ-centered families                |
| __3. Weekly worship                               | __15. Keep up with cultural changes                  |
| __4. Care for the poor                            | __16. Love for our neighbors                         |
| __5. Creative, innovative new ministries          | __17. Friendly fellowship                            |
| __6. Global missions                              | __18. Working for peace and justice                  |
| __7. Evangelism                                   | __19. Faithful service in church and community       |
| __8. Healing ministries-health and wholeness      | __20. Giving/tithing                                 |
| __9. Daily prayer                                 | __21. Inviting others to come to know and love Jesus |
| __10. A well-kept facility                        | __22. Children's Ministry                            |
| __11. Regular Bible study-growing adult disciples | __23. Baptism- Holy Communion                        |
| __12. Care of creation; stewardship of the earth  | __24. Everyone is welcome                            |
|   | __25. Financial stability                            |
|   | __26. Maintaining traditions                         |

**Step 3:** \*Star the top five Guiding Principles/Core Values.

**Step 4:** Share the top five Core Values with others at your table.

**Step 5:** List the top five Core Values at your table.

**Step 6:** Share your top five Core Values with the large group.

**Step 7:** Come to consensus about your congregation's five Guiding Principles or Core Values.

### **Defining Core Values or Guiding Principles**

1. Core Values are constant.
2. Core Values are passionate.
3. Core Values are biblical.
4. Core Values are core beliefs.

### **The Importance of Guiding Principles/Core Values**

1. Values drive the ministry.
2. Values communicate what's important.
3. Values affect the church's overall behavior.
4. Values inspire people to action.
5. Values help people embrace positive change.
6. Values contribute to ministry success.

*Re-Rooting in God's Mission* resource, Eastern North Dakota and Northwestern Minnesota Synods



# A Process for Discerning a Purpose Statement

## A Ten-Step “How To” Process for Your Congregation

### Discovering God’s Will for Your Congregation

God’s mission is to redeem the world, and God so loved this world, that God sent his only Son, Jesus, to accomplish that mission. Jesus’ mission is most clearly summed up in John 10:10, “I have come so that you may have life and have it abundantly.” The goal is to discover and put into words how your congregation will join in God’s mission to redeem the world so that all might have the abundant life. We are working together to discover YOUR purpose in God’s mission. Hopefully, after working this process, you will have a purpose statement that will begin to guide your congregation’s future.

This process will be informed by prayer and Bible study. We are seeking God’s will for your congregation. Seeking God’s will is a **humble** process. It is being open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. It is being open to creative and new ways of being the church, because the Holy Spirit is by nature a creative force. It is a humble process because we seek to do God’s will; not my will, not your will, but God’s will. **Begin with prayer.**

#### 1. Open with prayer:

*Almighty God, your mission is to redeem the world. Inspire us by your Holy Spirit with passion and courage so we can join you in that work. Open our eyes to see you moving in our community. Open our ears to hear your call. Open our hearts to love our neighbors. Open our minds to imagine new ways of sharing the good news about Jesus in the world. AMEN.*

*Pray the Lord’s Prayer exactly as it is written below.*

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.  
Thy Kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. **Lord, your will be done in this congregation.** Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
**Lord, your will be done in this community.**  
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever.  
Amen.

**2. Context:** Before this session, members of your congregation, not the pastor, compiled significant demographic data and a map of the community with pins or dot stickers indicating where members live. This data should include: population, schools, health care facilities, major businesses, ethnic diversity, level of education of residents, income levels, poverty levels, types of homes and housing, recreational areas, distance most members live from church. Check the 2010 US Census Report for this data.

Your purpose is shaped by God’s will for you. It is shaped by your unique geography and demographic situation. It is shaped by your unique history. So your purpose is unique. Look at the map and demographic information right now.

Answer these questions:

What is unique about your context?

What is surprising about the numbers?

What makes God cry?

What give God joy?

Put map, data, and responses to these questions up on a wall.

Look at the map and demographic information; this is your mission field.

You are missionaries to these areas.

**3. Mission Field:** Now look at this information about church affiliation. Share the ARDA results, for example...

1980-65.4% of residents of Clay County members of a church

2000-65.0% of residents of Clay County members of a church

2010-60.9% of residents of Clay County members of a church

If this trend continues, what percent of the population will be unchurched in 2020?

Nearly 40% of the population is unchurched today.

**This is your mission field.**

**4. Bible Study:** Ask the pastor or lay leader to give a two-minute overview of the book of Acts. Break into small groups of four to six. Give each group one of these chapters to read.

Bible Study Acts 2, 10, 16 in small groups (25 minutes)

- Select someone to be recorder and reporter. Read the Bible text out loud.
- Read it a second time silently.
- What is God doing in these verses? Underline it!
- What did the people of faith do? Underline with a squiggly line.
- What key lessons would you say any church should learn/remember from these verses?
- Write your answers on the newsprint with markers.

Each small group should write responses on newsprint and then report to the larger group: What is God doing in Acts 2? Acts 10? Acts 14? What are people of faith doing? What can all churches learn from this?

**5. Missional Questions:** God's mission is to redeem the world. How your congregation joins God in that work is your purpose. Your task is to discover what God's will is for your congregation. "Thy will be done."

Discussion:

Why in God's name does your congregation exist? What is God calling you to do for Christ's sake?

**6. Pray again these prayers:**

**Pray:** *Almighty God, your mission is to redeem the world. Inspire us by your Holy Spirit with passion and courage so we can join you in that work. Open our eyes to see you moving in our community. Open our ears to hear your call. Open our hearts to love our neighbors. Open our minds to imagine new ways of sharing the good news about Jesus in the world.*

**Pray the Lord's Prayer as written below:**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy Name.  
Thy Kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
**Lord, your will be done in this congregation.**  
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
**Lord, your will be done in this community.**  
Give us this day our daily bread. And  
forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive them that trespass against us. And  
lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
The power, and the glory,  
For ever and ever. Amen.

Invite participants to walk around the room and review the notes from the Bible Study.

**Pray silently for 10 minutes.** What is God's purpose for our congregation?

On a post-it note complete this sentence: "God's purpose for \_\_\_\_\_ church is . . ." adding 12 words or less.

**7. Create one statement for the small group:** After the silent prayer and everyone has created a purpose statement, in small groups read your purpose statements out loud and try to take the best from each purpose statement to **create one statement for the small group.** Give each small group a sheet of newsprint to write their 12-word purpose statement.

**8. Present the purpose statements from all small groups.** Identify common words in all the statements. Which words or ideas come up most often? List all the verbs. List all the adverbs.

**9. Work to create one single purpose statement:** Remember, this is a humble process....what is God's will?...not mine...come to consensus, don't vote.

**10. Celebrate your new Purpose Statement!**

Discuss ways of developing "buy-in" for the purpose statement:

- **Rewrite and rework by leadership team**
- **Approval by leadership team, approval by congregational consensus?**
- **Preaching series on the purpose statement?**
- **Articles about it in the newsletter**
- **Poster design contest-website-letterhead design**
- **Adult education series**

Consider inviting an "outsider" to come in and lead this process.

This process is based on *Living Lutheran: Renewing Your Congregation*, by the Rev. Dr. David Daubert and adapted by the Rev. Dr. Laurie Skow-Anderson.

## **Bible Study**

Count off to create random groups, making sure spouses are in separate groups.  
There should be at least four in each group.  
Take 20-30 minutes for each group to read their passage and answer the questions.

### **Book of Acts: A Two-Minute Introduction**

**Author:** the same author wrote both Luke and Acts. The tradition from the earliest days of the church has been that Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul, wrote both Luke and Acts.

**Date of Writing:** The Book of Acts was likely written between 61- 64 A.D.

**Purpose of Writing:** The Book of Acts was written to provide a history of the early church. The emphasis of the book is the importance of the day of Pentecost and being empowered to be effective witnesses for Jesus Christ. The book sheds light on the gift of the Holy Spirit, who empowers, guides, teaches, and serves as our Counselor.

Saul, whose name was changed to Paul, was the most influential apostle. Before he was converted, Paul took great pleasure in persecuting and killing Christians. Paul's dramatic conversion on the Damascus road is a highlight of the Book of Acts.

The disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

### **Outline of the Book of Acts**

1. Beginning of the Church-Pentecost-believer's fellowship-Stephen martyred (Acts 1-8)
2. Persecution of the church-Saul's conversion-Peter's vision (Acts 8-12)
3. Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 12-14)
4. Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15)
5. Paul's second and third missionary journeys - Paul and Silas in jail (Acts 15-20)
6. Paul's arrest in Jerusalem and sent to Rome (Acts 21-26)

#### **1. Bible Study Acts 2**

*Ask one person in your group to be the recorder/reporter.*

*Read the Bible verses out loud. Read the verses a second time silently.*

*Prayerfully answer the following questions. You should have 5-6 responses for each question. During the large group time the recorder/reporter will summarize the Bible story and share the answers to the questions.*

**What is God doing in these verses? Underline What did the people of faith do? Squiggly line**

**What key lessons would you say any church should learn/remember from these verses?**

**Acts 1:6-8** <sup>6</sup>So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?’ <sup>7</sup>He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’

**Acts 2:14-24** But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. <sup>15</sup>Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup>No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup> “In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

<sup>18</sup> Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

<sup>19</sup> And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

<sup>20</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

<sup>21</sup> Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

<sup>22</sup> ‘You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— <sup>23</sup>this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. <sup>24</sup>But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.

**2:38-47** <sup>38</sup>Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup>For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.’ <sup>40</sup>And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ <sup>41</sup>So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. <sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

<sup>43</sup> Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup>Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

## 2. Bible Study Acts 10

**What is God doing in these verses?**

**What did the people of faith do?**

**What key lessons would you say any church should learn/remember from these verses?**

**Acts 10** In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort, as it was called. <sup>2</sup>He was a devout man who feared God with all his household; he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God. <sup>3</sup>One afternoon at about three o'clock he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, 'Cornelius.' <sup>4</sup>He stared at him in terror and said, 'What is it, Lord?' He answered, 'Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. <sup>5</sup>Now send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter; <sup>6</sup>he is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside.' <sup>7</sup>When the angel who spoke to him had left, he called two of his slaves and a devout soldier from the ranks of those who served him, <sup>8</sup>and after telling them everything, he sent them to Joppa.

<sup>9</sup> About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. <sup>10</sup>He became hungry and wanted something to eat; and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance. <sup>11</sup>He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. <sup>12</sup>In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. <sup>13</sup>Then he heard a voice saying, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' <sup>14</sup>But Peter said, 'By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean.' <sup>15</sup>The voice said to him again, a second time, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' <sup>16</sup>This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven.

<sup>17</sup> Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon's house and were standing by the gate. <sup>18</sup>They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there. <sup>19</sup>While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Look, three men are searching for you. <sup>20</sup>Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them.' <sup>21</sup>So Peter went down to the men and said, 'I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?' <sup>22</sup>They answered, 'Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.' <sup>23</sup>So Peter invited them in and gave them lodging.

The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the believers from Joppa accompanied him. <sup>24</sup>The following day they came to Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup>On Peter's arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshipped him. <sup>26</sup>But Peter made him get up, saying, 'Stand up; I am only a mortal.' <sup>27</sup>And as he talked with him, he went in and found that many had assembled; <sup>28</sup>and he said to them, 'You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean. <sup>29</sup>So when I was sent for, I came without objection. Now may I ask why you sent for me?'

<sup>30</sup> Cornelius replied, 'Four days ago at this very hour, at three o'clock, I was praying in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling clothes stood before me. <sup>31</sup>He said, "Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. <sup>32</sup>Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon, who is called Peter; he is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner, by the sea." <sup>33</sup>Therefore I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. So now all of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say.'

<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak to them: ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup>but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup>You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup>That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: <sup>38</sup>how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup>We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; <sup>40</sup>but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, <sup>41</sup>not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup>He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup>All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.’

<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup>The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, <sup>46</sup>for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup>‘Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ <sup>48</sup>So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

### 3. Bible Study Acts 16

**What is God doing in these verses? What did the people of faith do?**

**What key lessons would you say any church should learn/remember from these verses?**

**Acts 16:16-40** <sup>16</sup> One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup> While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, 'These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation.' <sup>18</sup> She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour.

<sup>19</sup> But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market-place before the authorities. <sup>20</sup> When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, 'These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews <sup>21</sup> and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe.' <sup>22</sup> The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup> After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely.

<sup>24</sup> Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

<sup>25</sup> About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup> Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. <sup>27</sup> When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup> But Paul shouted in a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.' <sup>29</sup> The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup> Then he brought them outside and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' <sup>31</sup> They answered, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' <sup>32</sup> They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup> At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. <sup>34</sup> He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

<sup>35</sup> When morning came, the magistrates sent the police, saying, 'Let those men go.' <sup>36</sup> And the jailer reported the message to Paul, saying, 'The magistrates sent word to let you go; therefore come out now and go in peace.' <sup>37</sup> But Paul replied, 'They have beaten us in public, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they going to discharge us in secret? Certainly not! Let them come and take us out themselves.' <sup>38</sup> The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens; <sup>39</sup> so they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city.

<sup>40</sup> After leaving the prison they went to Lydia's home; and when they had seen and encouraged the brothers and sisters there, they departed.



# **Intentional Blank Page**

# Early Assessment of Interim Assignment

The interim pastor is asked to use the following form to assist in evaluating a new interim assignment in the first six weeks, and then submit it to the Office of the Bishop. Use this form to help identify areas to address during the interim.

Church Name \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Interim Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Attendance Trends

What is the average worship attendance in the current year? \_\_\_\_\_

What was last year's worship attendance reported to the ELCA? \_\_\_\_\_

Has there been a change in worship attendance during the past two years? Yes No

If so, to what do people attribute this?

## 2. Financial / Stewardship Trends

Is the financial situation stable or unstable? Stable Unstable

Has there been a marked change in the financial situation? Yes No

If so, to what do people attribute this change?

Does the situation indicate readiness to support a called pastor? Yes No

When was the last audit by the Audit Committee? \_\_\_\_\_

Are audits conducted annually? Yes No

Is there an annual Stewardship Pledge Drive? Yes No

What percentage of the congregation pledges annually? \_\_\_\_\_%

### 3. Congregational Participation Trends

What are people saying about volunteer participation?	High	Med	Low
What are people saying about event participation?	High	Med	Low
Do people feel connected to ministries of the congregation?	Yes	No	
Has there been a recent change in volunteer & event participation?	Yes	No	
If so, to what do people attribute this change?			

### 4. Leadership Trends

What's the congregation's trust level in their elected leadership?	High	Med	Low
Do leaders feel adequate to their task?	Yes	No	
Are there any signs of burnout?	Yes	No	
Does the congregation have a history of leader/participant burnout?	Yes	No	
How is communication between leadership and the congregation?	High	Med	Low
Is the leadership using their constitution as a guide for their leadership?	Yes	No	
Is there a long-range strategic plan?	Yes	No	
If so, when was it last reviewed or revised?			



### 5. Organization for Ministry

Is there a clear internal structure to the organization for ministry?	Yes	No
Is the structure working to effectively deliver ministry?	Yes	No
If not, to what do people attribute this?		

Is there appropriate accountability/communication between leadership & ministries?	Yes	No
Are all ministry teams/committees functioning?	Yes	No
Are new people welcomed into existing structures of leadership?	Yes	No
Is there a clear mission/vision statement?	Yes	No

## 6. Attitude Trends

What are people saying about attitudes in the congregation?

Has there been a shift in attitudes in the last two years? Yes No

Is there conflict present in the congregation? Yes No

If so, to what do people attribute this?

Is the congregation welcoming of visitors? Yes No

Is there a system of visitor follow up? Yes No

Is the congregation hopeful and positive? Yes No

Is the congregation focused inward or outward? Inward Outward

What's the congregation's current anxiety/fear level? High Med Low

## 7. Spiritual Trends

Does prayer permeate the entire organization? Yes No

Is there an active prayer group/chain? Yes No

Are people eager to grow spiritually? Yes No

Is there ongoing Christian Education of youth? Yes No

Is there ongoing Bible Study for adults? Yes No

**8. Conclusions**

Is the situation as you expected to find it as described  
by the Office of the Bishop?

Yes      No

What appears to be the primary gift of this congregation?

What stands out as troublesome/challenging for this congregation?

List any other areas that need addressing that are not mentioned above.

My name entered here constitutes my electronic signature to this report and attests that all information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Transmittal Instructions:

E-mail copies of this report to: Assistant to the Bishop Connie Schmucker at **ConnieS@fbsynod.org**

OR

You may print and mail a copy of this report to: **Office of the Bishop  
Florida-Bahamas Synod ELCA  
3838 W Cypress St  
Tampa, FL 33607**