



**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.”*

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***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

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

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

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- ☐ 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**

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- ☐ 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.

- ☐ 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**

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- ☐ 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**

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- ☐ 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**

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- ☐ 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**

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- ☐ 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.
- ☐ 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

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- ☐ 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 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

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- ☐ 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**

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- ☐ 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**

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- ☐ 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!



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**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

**Step 10:**

Congregation votes to extend a call; pastor accepts or declines call

*What happens next?*

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:**

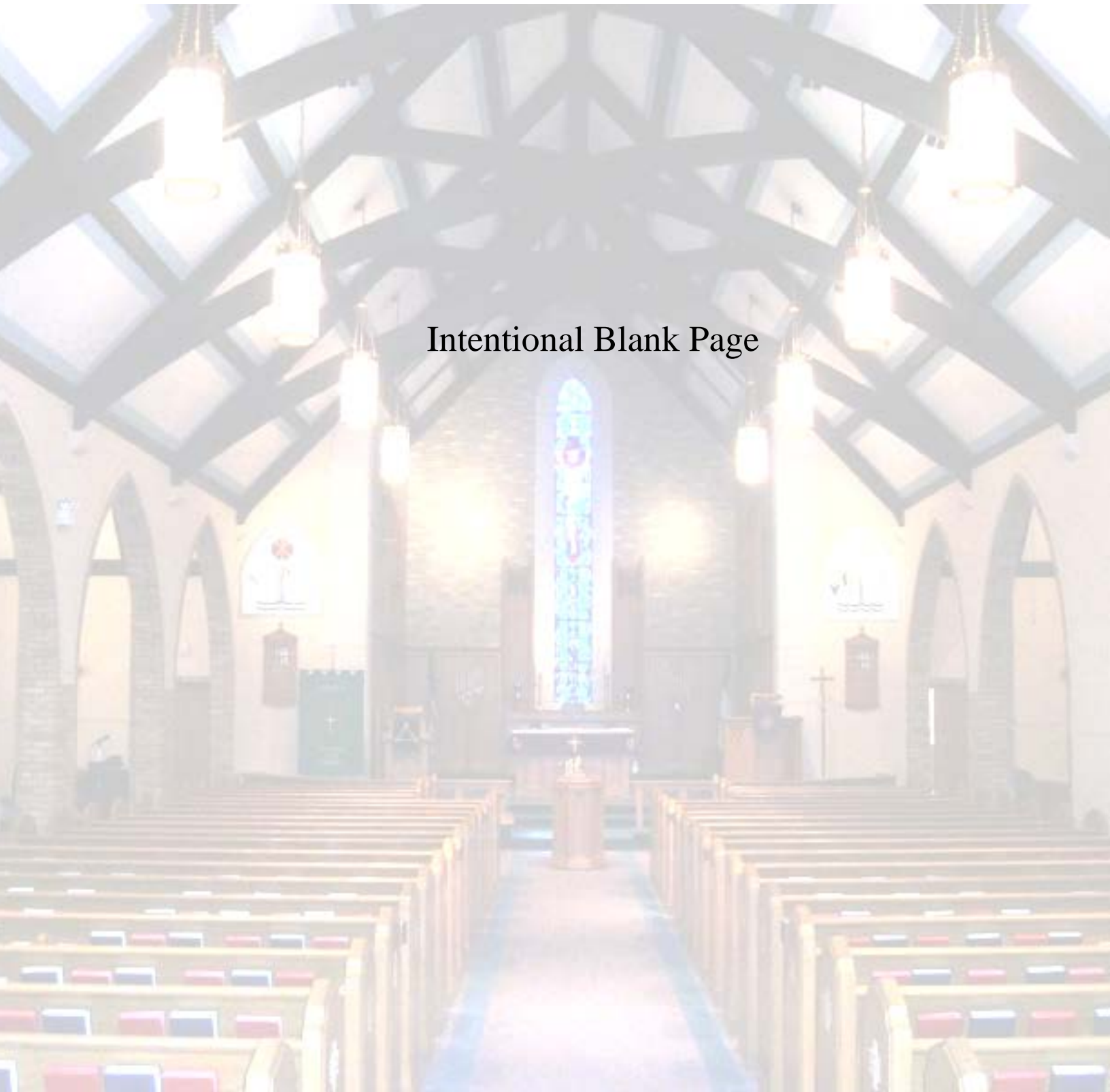
Primary candidate identified & interviewed by congregation council

**Step 6:**

A Call List is formed

**Step 7:**

Interview of candidates



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## *Resource C*

# *The Importance of Communication*

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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.

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.



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## SECTION 1

# *Pastor Resigns or Retires*

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

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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**

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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.

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

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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.

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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.

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

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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**

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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.

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## Resource A

# *The Dynamics of Transition*

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

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### What to Expect for Your Ministry

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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.

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.

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## *Resource B*

# *The Ethics of Pastoral Transition*

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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**

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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.

## Interim Pastors

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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

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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

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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.**

### **Outgoing Pastor Must Sign Below**

Send return a signed copy to Administrative Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership at [tinaf@fbsynod.org](mailto:tinaf@fbsynod.org) and keep a copy for your records.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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*Resource C*

## *Thanksgiving at the Conclusion of a Call*

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*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.**

*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.

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*Resource D*

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

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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?

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## *Resource E*

# *The Exit Interview*

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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?

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.**



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Resource F

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

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**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.

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## Resource G

# Guidelines for Retired Ordained Ministers

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*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**

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].*



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## SECTION 2

# *The Interim Pastor Arrives*

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

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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.

### **Why an Interim Pastor and a Transition Process?**

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There are often those who will ask why it is that a congregation needs to have an interim pastor and a transition process to follow, as opposed to immediately forming a Call Committee and getting on with the business of finding a new pastor. Such questions often reflect the anxiety that is caused by the departure of a pastor and the unknown road ahead until a new pastor arrives. No one likes to be anxious, but anxiety is a natural part of transitions everywhere, in life and in the church.

**1. Addressing such anxiety** is one of the first reasons for having an interim pastor and a transition process that is intentional and measured in all its parts. The interim pastor, through ongoing preaching, teaching, pastoral care and interaction with the members of a congregation, can help restore a sense of stability for everyone so that all minds can be clear and free of anxiety when approaching a call process. The interim pastor is there to speak that good word from God for these moments of uncertainty and anxiety: "Do not be afraid. God is here, and God will lead us." (Gen.15:1; Isaiah 41:10).

Most people understand that making quick choices while being anxious will not always bring the best result. So the interim pastor and the intentional transition process of the Florida-Bahamas Synod helps to lower the anxiety and provide a place for the Holy Spirit to work in and among the people to guide their steps for a call process that can better result in a pastoral candidate of God's own choosing.

**2. Another reason** for an interim pastor and an intentional transition process is to give a congregation time for reflection between pastors. Congregations will often be defined significantly by the personalities and gifts of the pastor who serves them. And yet congregations have their own sense of call from God and have a history that is also filled with God and with ministries that God has inspired that go beyond any one pastor who has served that church, regardless how long.

At the same time, congregational members come and go during any pastor's service period. That means the gifts and talents in a congregation are always changing, which means that the possibilities for ministry and what God might be calling that congregation into is something that changes as well.

So an intentional transition process following a pastor's departure or retirement provides the opportunity for the congregation to reflect on questions such as these: "Who are we apart from the pastor who last served us? What is different in our congregation and in our context for ministry from when the

last pastor arrived? What new blessings have come to us and what new talents and gifts are now a part of us that God might use for ministry? Where might God be calling us as a congregation now in this changed context? The interim pastor and the intentional transition process help congregations to take time to discern God presence, blessings and leading.

**3. Some congregations** have been blessed with long stays by pastors serving them for many years, perhaps even decades. Such long-term ministries can provide a stability within a congregation that can have a comfortableness and familiarity to it that is most welcome and satisfying for congregational members. Even in shorter-term ministries, church members can develop strong attachments to their pastors and really come to depend on those pastors for personal and ministry assistance.

The departure of such pastors can therefore leave some church members with a real sense of loss. Learning to live with such loss can take time and can include typical grief patterns of anger, depression, denial, and bargaining before acceptance sets in for all and a congregation is ready to move forward with a renewed sense of dedication and purpose in God's mission.

The interim pastor and the intentional transition process is sensitive to the time that it might take for a congregation to grieve and process their loss prior to moving into a call process. The interim pastor keeps the Office of the Bishop informed as to the progress of a congregation as they work through grief, offering helpful tools and comforting care. Finally the interim pastor will advise the Bishop and the congregational Council as to when the congregation seems ready to begin a call process.

**4. A call process**, once begun, will bring pastoral candidates to the church campus for interviews. Most congregational members look forward to this with eagerness, because they know that this will be their first look at possible pastors for their ministries.

It should not be forgotten, however, that these pastors are coming to look over the church campus and the congregation that they are being invited to consider serving. Are all things ready for this at the church? Is the church physical plant in good working order, tidy in each of its sections and rooms, and ready to be seen by someone new? Is the congregation itself in good working order, eager and active in their ministries, with positive attitudes, ample volunteers, and good support providing adequate resources for all that God calls the congregation to do? Or does some of this need some attention and work? Has there been something that the last pastor had to deal with that the next pastor should NOT have to deal with?

The interim pastor and the intentional transition process helps a congregation to get ready for a call process by bringing tools that will allow members to evaluate their situation and to make improvements where necessary. The interim pastor also bring a fresh set of eyes to see things like an outsider might see them. The interim pastor also brings a fresh perspective that may not have been considered before as the leaders and congregation review their situation together.

The goal is to have the best possible call process and the best possible outcome to that process – one that is filled with God and guided by the Holy Spirit. So intentional time and effort will be put into preparation for that process through forms that will help to evaluate the ministry situation and make sure that all things that need to be looked at have been assessed and addressed.

**These are just some** of the reasons that interim pastors are appointed to vacancies in congregations and an intentional transition process is employed in the Florida-Bahamas Synod. Even as the reasons above indicate, the process that is used is tailored to each congregation and the unique situation of their ministry. The Office of Bishop works hand-in-glove with congregations, their leaders and interim pastors to evaluate each ministry setting, navigate the process through the needs of that setting, and pace the process for the sake of a good and Spirit-filled outcome that results in a new pastor for the congregation.

## Arrival of the Interim Pastor

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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

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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.

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

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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 (see <https://fbsynod.com/mission-insite/> for instructions on registering, logging into and navigating MissionInsite). 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**

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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**

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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.

## **Interim Pastors and the Call Process**

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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**

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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.



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.

- 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 focus areas 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 Focus Areas 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**

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## *Resource B*

# *Order of Welcome for the Interim Pastor*

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*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.*

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

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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 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**

## II. CURRENT BUILDING USAGE

7. Time wise, our building is utilized for ministry gatherings and outside community activities approximately how many hours each week (outside of Sunday morning)?

☐ 0-5 hours    ☐ 5-20 hours    ☐ 21-40 hours    ☐ 40-60 hours

8. Overall, our facilities (sanctuary & parish hall) are:

☐ Under-utilized

☐ Just right for our needs

☐ Too small for our needs

9. Do you currently lease any of your facilities to other organizations?                      Y ☐    N ☐

a. If so, what percentage of total income does this rent represent annually?                      \_\_\_\_\_%

10. Based on our answers above, do we see our Current Building Usage as an opportunity or a threat for our sustainability as a congregation?

☐ **Opportunity**    ☐ **Threat**

## SUSTAINABILITY: FINANCES

## III. FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

11. Our current stewardship efforts consists of: (check all that apply)

☐ Adopting a budget at the annual meeting.

☐ Printing the offering amount in the bulletin each Sunday.

☐ Including a bulletin appeal when funds are running short.

☐ Monthly stewardship temple talks by a lay leader that focuses on practices of generosity as part of growing in faith.

☐ Annual Financial Stewardship campaign.

☐ We actively encourage and lift up the Biblical practice of tithing.

12. Half (or more) of our annual congregational giving comes from the 65+ age group?    Y ☐    N ☐

13. If our congregation's top one or two giving households died within the next year, there would be a financial crisis within our congregation?                      Y ☐    N ☐

14. We know the giving capacity of our congregation, based on the median household income in the area?                      Y ☐    N ☐

*(That info can be found at [www.census.gov/quickfacts/](http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/) Enter zip code and choose "Income & Poverty" in the Select-a-Fact box. Also available at [MissionInsite.com](http://MissionInsite.com))*

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/benefit-costs-calculator#/>)* 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.*

	<b>Declined to not sustainable</b>	<b>Declining but still sustainable</b>	<b>Maintaining</b>	<b>Growing or Increasing</b>	<i>Copy number</i>
<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.***

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# *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):

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	<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 (see <a href="https://fbsynod.com/mission-insite/">https://fbsynod.com/mission-insite/</a> for instructions on registering, logging into and navigating MissionInsite)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date Completed ____/____/____	18. MissionInsite studied and discussed by congregation council regarding mission and ministry planning prior to call process.	<input 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. (fbsynod.com/resources/transitions)	<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

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# 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.

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*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 the way of salvation.” <sup>18</sup> She kept doing 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 marketplace 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 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 the 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 they are 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.

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*Resource G*

## *Early Assessment of Interim Assignment*

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*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? \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Yes ☐ No

Has there been a change in worship attendance during the past two years?

If so, to what do people attribute this?

### 2. Financial / Stewardship Trends

Is the financial situation stable or unstable?

☐ Stable ☐ Unstable

☐ Yes ☐ No

Has there been a marked change in the financial situation?

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

Are decisions made in the congregation through healthy and appropriate channels?

☐ 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

What issues (if any) have been left unaddressed for a considerable time that need addressing?

## 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:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 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**



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## SECTION 3

### *The Call Committee is Selected*

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#### **Readiness to Enter the Call Process**

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The decision that a congregation is ready to move forward into the call process is a mutual decision of the bishop and the congregation council. The decision will be based upon the sense of health and strength of the congregation. Often this will involve the completion of a ministry assessment and/or a conflict resolution process, plus the checklist. This will also include a review of the readiness of a congregation to financially support a Pastor. If it has been a while since the congregation council submitted their financials during the transition process, the financials (including a balance sheet) will again be requested to be sent to the Assistant to the Bishop for Administration with a copy to the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership.

When the bishop and the council agree that the congregation is ready to move into the call process, a representative of the Office of the Bishop will review the process for forming a call committee with the council president who should in turn share that review with the whole council.

#### **The Role of the Call Committee**

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The role of a call committee is of critical importance as it seeks to identify a shepherd to support the God-given ministry of the congregation. The committee is given the responsibility and privilege of interviewing the potential pastoral candidates and identifying the pastor who seems to align with their discernment of God's will to recommend to the congregation council. This is a holy task that is to be done prayerfully and carefully. It recognizes that the church's call to a pastor to serve as its shepherd is much different than a hiring process.

Throughout the entire process, the call committee represents the mission, ministry, guiding principles and goals of the congregation. Therefore it is important that the committee understands these as they have been established through the Ministry Focusing Retreat and the work of the congregation council (see Section 2, Page 6, "Claiming a Clear Identity in God's Call and Mission") This may mean having an initial joint meeting of the call committee and congregation council to discuss and review mission and ministry goals so that both groups are coming into the call process with a unified view. This will set the stage for development of the Mission Site Profile by the call committee as described in Section 5 of this manual.

When the profile is complete and a call list is prepared by the Office of the Bishop, the call committee's focus becomes: Is this the person God desires to shepherd this congregation in its particular mission and setting?

#### **Process for Forming a Call Committee**

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The congregation's constitution provides a process for electing or appointing a call committee of usually six to eight persons. Sometimes there are provisions for selecting alternates to serve should a member of the call committee become unable to serve. The congregation council will carefully review

procedures for selecting members to serve on the call committee. The term of Office for the call committee terminates upon installation of the newly called pastor. (See C13.05 of your congregation's constitution.)

Forming a call committee is a task of discernment. The call committee should be as representative of the whole congregation as is possible, giving consideration to the inclusion of newer members and longer-term members, older and younger members (perhaps a youth), ethnic diversity, and a balance of female and male members. Persons who represent various ministries and programs of the congregation would be an important factor in the selection process.

Included at the end of this Section 3 is a most important resource entitled ***Guidelines for Choosing Call Committee Members***. The council will want to review it carefully and share this information with all who are involved in the selection of nominees for the call committee. This is an important selection process, and it is never wise to simply ask for volunteers to serve on a call committee. It should also be noted that if the call process is for an associate or assistant pastor, the senior pastor serves as a member of the call committee.

When the call committee has been appointed or elected, the council notifies the Office of the Bishop and provides the name and contact information for the committee's chairperson, or, an initial contact person on the call committee until the committee selects its chairperson. A copy of a service for the ***Installation of a Call Committee with Prayers for a Shepherd*** is included at the end of this Section 3.

The first meeting of the call committee is scheduled with the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership and the dean, who attend to provide overview to the call committee about their role, privilege, expectations and process ahead. The congregation council is expected to attend this meeting with the Assistant to the Bishop as well.

After meeting with the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership, the Call Committee will want to identify the following positions: a chairperson, a secretary, a computer person, a communicator, a chaplain and a council liaison person who will keep the Church Council informed of progress. Some of these positions may be combined. For example, the chairperson may be the communicator and/or council liaison.



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*Resource A*

## *Guidelines for Choosing Members of the Call Committee*

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Those responsible for selecting persons as nominees for the call committee have a very important task and should prayerfully approach their work seeking God's guidance. The constitution should be reviewed to determine any restrictions relating to the number of persons to serve on the committee, the method of election or appointment, whether alternates will be selected, and the nominating process that may be required. It is never wise to simply solicit volunteers for a call committee. Rather, a careful and thoughtful discernment process should be followed to ensure that the best possible candidates are considered and selected to serve.

**General characteristics and expectations of ALL persons who serve on the call committee include the following:**

- **Strong evidence of faith** -Faithful worship participation should be a prerequisite for any person chosen to serve on the call committee. These people should be persons of prayer who will faithfully and carefully seek to discern God's will for this congregation.
- **Active in the life of the congregation** - call committee members should be involved the life and ministry of the congregation beyond worship, and familiar with its programs and activities. They will represent the importance of these ministries to potential pastors.
- **Positive and enthusiastic spirit** -The call committee will represent the congregation to the pastoral candidates during the interview process. They should have a deep sense of the vision and mission of the congregation. This is not a place for chronic complainers.
- **Faithful stewards** -Those who serve on the call committee should recognize that all that they have and are belongs to God. As good stewards, they are persons who share their gifts of time, talent and treasures in the ministry of God's Kingdom.
- **Commitment and follow-through** -The call committee is charged with a significant responsibility on behalf of the whole congregation. Meetings may be frequent and a willingness to share and participate faithfully in the work of the committee is critical.

**Further, the call committee should be as representative of the whole congregation as is possible.**

**Special consideration should be given to including:**

Newer members and longer term members; Older and younger members, perhaps including a youth; Ethnic and cultural diversity; Balance of female and male members; Representation of various ministries and programs of the congregation.

**Special notes:**

1. Congregation members who are also synod parish deacons, employees or staff members of this congregation should not serve on the call committee because of potential conflict of interest.
2. Rostered persons, active or retired, or their spouse/partner should not serve on a call committee. There are other ways for these folks to share their input. An exception is that the senior pastor serves on the call committee to call an additional rostered leader.
3. It is not necessary for council members to serve on the call committee, and if desired, the maximum should be one; the council president should not serve on the call committee.

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## *Resource B*

# *Installation of a Call Committee*

### *with Prayers for a Shepherd*

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*P= Presiding Minister   A= Assisting Minister   R= Call Committee   C= Congregation*

*The order follows the Creed and replaces the Prayer of the Church. The congregation may be seated.*

P. Sisters and brothers in Christ, God has called us to a new time in our life as \_\_\_\_\_ Church. It is a time for reflection and prayer, a time for self-examination and seeking, a time for expectation and hope. We need a shepherd to lead our flock, and God has promised that he will provide a shepherd for us.

A. The following persons have been appointed/elected to serve as the call committee of our church.

*As the names are read, those persons present come forward to the chancel.*

P. Dear friends, you have been duly *appointed/elected* to serve as the call committee for this congregation in order to seek a pastor to shepherd and lead us. Sacred scripture guides us in our task, to seek a pastor who strives for righteousness and godliness, faith and love, endurance and gentleness - a pastor who is a servant as Christ himself was a servant--a pastor who is not domineering or quarrelsome, but who leads with care and concern for God's flock--a pastor who is filled with the Holy Spirit and a trustworthy steward of the mysteries of God. Yours is a spiritual endeavor on behalf of this congregation. Are you willing therefore to be open to the Spirit's leading, and, by prayer and holy conversation, to undertake this calling to seek a shepherd for us?

R. **Yes, by the help of God.**

P. Will you be diligent in your seeking, careful in your listening, purposeful in your questioning, and respectful in all that you do?

R. **Yes, by the help of God.**

P. Will you seek the Lord's guidance through Holy Scripture and prayer and in your deliberations with your fellow committee members until you are brought to one mind and one will in Christ and have discerned God's shepherd for us?

R. **Yes, by the help of God.**

*All stand.*

A. Let us pray for those who are being installed today and for our church as we seek the Lord's guidance during this special time.

Almighty God, you alone are the great Shepherd of the sheep, and we turn to you to lead and guide us in all things. Our trust and our hope is in you.

C. **You are the way, the truth, and the life.**

A. As you have raised up faithful servants of your holy word to tend your flock in each time and place, send us now, we pray, a faithful shepherd to lead our flock.

C. **Send us a shepherd, O Lord.**

A. Send us a shepherd of goodness and grace, of strength and faith, of righteousness in your sight.

C. **Send us a shepherd, O Lord.**

A. Send us a shepherd to comfort and care for us, to preach your word, to teach our children, to baptize and commune, to marry and counsel, to visit the sick and lay to rest, to guide us and pray for us.

C. **Send us a shepherd, O Lord.**

A. Give us a holy patience in this time of our seeking, a patience that trusts in you for our present care, knowing that you will bring our good work to fulfillment in your time.

C. **O Lord, hear our prayer.**

A. Keep us faithful in mission, regular in worship, responsible in stewardship, mindful of the needy, and diligent in prayer.

C. **O Lord, hear our prayer.**

A. Fill us all with your Holy Spirit and magnify our gifts of discernment, that we might follow your will and leading into a future yet unknown.

C. **O Lord, hear our prayer.**

A. Bless those who are especially called to serve on the call committee. Give them the gifts they need to seek and find the pastor of your own nurturing, the shepherd of your own choosing, that we might be fed by your holy word and sacraments and grow in faith and love and ministry.

C. **O Lord, hear our prayer.**

P. All these things we ask, O God, with whatever else we need, in the name of him who is the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C. **Amen**

*The minister addresses the call committee.*

P. I now declare that you have been installed as the call committee of \_\_\_\_\_ Church. May God bring your good work to fulfillment and grace in Christ's name.

C. **Amen**

P. The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C. **And also with you.**

*All share the peace of the Lord.*

*The liturgy continues as is customary after the peace.*



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## SECTION 4

# *The Work of the Call Committee Begins*

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### **The Experience of Serving on a Call Committee**

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It is often reported that the experience of serving on a call committee is one of the most important and rewarding things that members of a congregation can do. They experience first-hand the working of God's Spirit through the whole process of discerning God's will for the congregation and the calling of its new pastor. It gives them an opportunity to see how the local congregation is vitally a part of the synod and the whole church.

In a very special way, members of a call committee participate in opening a new chapter in the life and ministry of a congregation. As a first step in the work of the call committee, the members of the committee will want to review the entirety of this manual, ***Walking Together Through The Transition Process***, and the various resources provided.

Two resources are included at the end of this Section 4 to assist call committees in their work. The first, ***The Call to Ministry***, will assist members of the committee to understand the very nature of God's calling to all people within the Church. The second resource is a short article on ***Discerning God's Will***, which presents basics in the process of discernment. Finally, a set of ***Five Devotions on Discernment from the Book of Acts*** for the call committee (useful elsewhere too) will assist the committee to incorporate these ideas into their work and spiritual lives.

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### **The Importance of Communication**

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Communicating regularly to the council and the congregation regarding the work and progress of the call committee helps keep everyone aware of how the process is moving along, and helps avoid the perception that things are being done in secret. Creative and frequent communication is a wonderful way to include everyone in the excitement of calling a new pastor!

The call committee should review the resource, Importance of Communication, located in the resources following the Introduction of this manual, for more information about communications. Some ideas include:

- Sharing a description and outline of the process;
- Posting summaries or copies of resources provided in ***Walking Together Through The Transition Process*** manual;
- Prayer petitions for the various stages of the call process to be used in worship;
- Temple Talks by various members of the call committee to share updates;
- Bulletin board displays showing the Time-Line Poster and providing information about the present work of the committee;
- Newsletter and bulletin articles; e-news updates;
- Visits to adult and youth Sunday School classes for conversation and sharing of news.

## Confidentiality

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While open and regular communication is a high priority, there are some parts of the call committee's responsibilities that are highly confidential in nature. During the interview stage of the call process, the call committee must keep all verbal and written information about each pastoral candidate strictly confidential. This means that committee members will need to establish ground rules and boundaries with their spouse/partner, family, the council, and the congregation at large.

Pastor-candidates place a great deal of trust in the ability of members of the call committee to keep confidences so as not to hinder their present ministries if they were not to receive a new call. It is inappropriate for call committee members to mention any information about candidates outside of the committee.

When a primary candidate has been identified by the call committee, only that candidate's name and information is to be shared with the council. It then becomes the council's role to decide whether to recommend the candidate to the congregation and to determine the process for introducing the candidate to the whole congregation.

The confidential information and the Rostered Minister Profile of the candidates who are not recommended to the council should be collected by the call committee chairperson and properly destroyed/shredded, or returned to a representative of the Office of the Bishop.

The call committee chair and recorder and the congregation council president and secretary are particularly cautioned about keeping information confidential in all forms of communication within their groups. Candidate names and locations should be guarded very carefully in these communications.

## Call Committee Expenses

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The congregation bears the responsibility for paying any expenses incurred by the call committee, including the costs involved in the travel, lodging and meals for pastoral candidates being interviewed by the call committee. The chairperson of the call committee works closely with the Treasurer of the congregation to assure that matters of confidentiality are maintained. Any travel and related expenses of call committee members incurred while doing the work of the Call Committee are to be reimbursed by the congregation.

It is the responsibility of the congregation council to authorize and provide in advance a budget line for call committee expenses. It should be understood that these expenses could well include the airline flights of pastoral candidates from various places in the United States and will include lodging expenses and meals. It is best to provide motel lodging for all candidates so that they may have their privacy, and confidentiality is maintained. It is inappropriate to place candidates in the homes of single persons. Confidentiality is broken when candidates are placed in homes that include family members who are not on the call committee.

The chairperson of the call committee should meet with the council to be certain that a budget line has been approved and that it is adequate for the call committee to do its work. Projections can be difficult because of uncertainty about where the pastor-candidates might live, but a reasonable figure can usually be determined in advance.

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## Resource A

# The Call to Ministry

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### The Call of All Christians

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I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in my Lord Jesus Christ or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has CALLED me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in true faith just as he CALLS, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth.

*(Small Catechism, 3rd Article, Apostles' Creed)*

In our Baptism, the Holy Spirit enters our lives to fill us with God's Spirit and to give us the faith through which we receive God's free gifts of forgiveness and new life. In Baptism, we are called into a relationship with God and to a life of service to all the people God has made.

All those who are baptized are called to proclaim the Gospel and to follow Christ's example of humble service and love for others. There is no higher calling.

For the sake of good order in the church, some Christians are called to ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament.

### A Call to the Public Ministry of Word and Sacrament

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In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel.

*(Augsburg Confession, Article V)*

In the course of daily living, God provides many settings in which the people of God are to live out their vocation or calling: marriage and parenthood, civil service, occupations, the ordained ministry, to name a few. The Office of Pastor was given to the church as a way to see that the means of grace, the Word and sacraments, were made available to the people in a regular and orderly fashion. Lutherans believe and teach that God established the Office of Pastor and authorized its perpetuation by the church.

The Spirit is at work calling some people to serve as pastors. Lutherans believe there are two parts of the Spirit's call. There is both an internal and external dimension of the call. The *internal call* is the nudging by the Holy Spirit that an individual experiences that prompts one to ministry. The *external call* is the call of the church. In it, the church discerns and publicly recognizes a person's internal call and confirms it with a call to specific ministry. Both dimensions of the call are necessary for a person to have a valid call to the ordained ministry. A person's call to the Office of Pastor and his/her ability to perform the required tasks are developed and certified by the church through seminary training and ordination.

*It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call. (Augsburg Confession, Article XIV)*

The Lutheran reformers saw the necessity of good order and recognized ordination as the church's means to assure it. Ordination belongs to the church. It is the task and privilege of the church to determine the standards for ordination and to oversee the continuing fitness of its pastors for ministry. Therefore, individuals who are ordained and rostered place themselves under the life-long authority of the church.

## **A Call to a Particular Context for Ministry**

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*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I, send me!" (Isaiah 6:8-9a)*

All calls originate with God, but the church issues calls to specific ministry. Ordinarily, this is through a congregation. If a pastor is being called to specialized ministry in the world, the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a Synod Council may issue a special call. The process of calling a pastor is very different than hiring an employee and should not be confused with secular hiring practices.

Lutherans firmly believe that the Holy Spirit plays the major role in the decision about who is the most appropriate person to provide pastoral ministry in any particular place. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Office of the Bishop, the Call Committee and pastoral candidates seek to discern God's will for the mission and ministry of a particular congregation.

## **Martin Luther's Advice to Those Seeking a Pastor**

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*Act in this way: first beseech God with prayers, both individual and in common. For this is a great undertaking, and the magnitude of it, rather than its novelty, impresses me. When you have so prayed, have no doubt that God to whom you have prayed is faithful and will give what you ask, opening to the one who knocks and granting to the one who seeks (Matt. 7:8).*

*Thus you may be assured that you are not pushing this matter, but being pushed in it. Then call and come together freely. Then let those who are leaders among you lay hands upon them, and certify and commend them to the people and the church or community. In this way let them become your bishops, ministers, or pastors. Amen. (Concerning the Ministry, Luther's Works, 40:40)*



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## Resource B

# Thoughts on the Call Process

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*The following is an excerpt from an individual who recently served as Chair of a Call Committee.*

I had the wonderful opportunity to be the Chairperson of the Call Committee for Calvary Lutheran Church. I have to say that this was probably the most fulfilling service experience I have ever had in the church. Here are my thoughts on what made my personal experience—as well as the wonderful end result—so exceptional.

1. Choose the right committee members. I spent time in prayer and in consultation with other church leaders in order to choose an appropriate committee. Members had to represent all three services, both genders, and a variety of ages. I also invited new, as well as, long-time members. The one thing they had in common was that they were all very faithful in worship and seemed to have only the best interest of the church at heart. When I asked them to consider being part of the committee, I was very upfront about the commitment. I let them know that the time frame was open-ended. I also did not accept answers immediately. Instead, I asked that they go home, talk to others in their families--and pray out it. I have to say—this process lead to an amazing group of outstanding dedicated and spirit-filled members.
2. Follow the Process, as outlined in the guidelines provided by the synod. The Call Process packet is outstanding. Read it. Then read it again. Follow it. Most importantly—USE THE DEVOTIONS! We began our meetings with the suggested devotions from the book of Acts. If you think you don't have time for the devotions, think again! You do Not have the time to waste in meetings with committee members who do not understand that hearing the whispers of the Holy Spirit is the most important factor in guiding you! In fact, our first couple of meetings focused on learning how the disciples came to choose a replacement for Judas and how the early Christians chose their pastors. If it was good enough for them, it must certainly be good enough for us! We did not draw lots...but we did have wonderful discussions on how we each hear the Holy spirit in our lives. Through these devotions and conversations, we grow to know, to trust, and to respect one another. This became crucial in our working together to choose our new pastor.
3. Call on the synod for support. We had the pleasure of having Pastor Rita (Assistant to the Bishop) attend one of our meetings. She was able to direct us and answer the many technical questions we had regarding the nuts and bolts of the process. She remained available and very supportive via phone and email throughout the call process. At the end, when we were putting together the final contract with a tentative call, the Bishop was also available for guidance and final approval. It was surprising (though maybe it should not have been) that leaders of our synod were so available, so responsive, and so approachable.

4. **DON'T RUSH THE PROCESS!!!!** This is probably the most important piece of advice I could give. I had the opportunity to chair the second call for an associate pastor at Calvary. I took special care to learn from the mistakes of the previous call that proved not to be a success. I didn't care about who to blame, but rather what went wrong last time. Why did we end up calling someone who proved to be a poor fit? After reviewing the previous process, we found that some of the committee members stated they knew that the pastor we were calling was not a good fit. But we proceeded with the call anyway.

In chairing this most recent committee, we agreed among ourselves to be open and honest—and to always be respectful of one another's opinions. And to listen...to one another, but especially to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. We agreed that we would not call a pastor unless we felt we truly had the person chosen for us by God. We did not allow pressure from the outside to interfere with our being led by the Holy Spirit.

\*\*\*

This past Sunday I took part in the installation of our new Associate Pastor. It was a jubilant celebration of Calvary's moving forward in mission. My heart was full—and my eyes filled with tears—knowing that God had worked his will through us, His faithful servants—who took time to listen and be led by Him.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cheryl Zemina  
Call Committee Chair  
Calvary Lutheran Church  
Apollo Beach, FL

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*Resource C*  
*Discerning God's Will: The Basics of Discernment*  
*by the Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel*

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**The Call Process: Discerning God's Will**

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The process of seeking and calling a pastor to serve a congregation is one of discernment. For Christians, the goal of all discernment is seeking the will of God in each situation. The call process therefore seeks to know God's will for the future mission and ministry of a congregation and who God chooses as pastor and shepherd for that ministry. It is God who chooses. It is the work of the Call Committee, the Congregation Council, the congregation, the pastors interviewed and the Office of the Bishop to discern God's choice and the Spirit's leading.

When a congregation enters into the call process, they enter into a process of discernment that has its roots in the New Testament community described in the book of Acts. In Acts 1, when it was time to fill the vacancy left by Judas among the Twelve Apostles, the disciples all prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry..." (Acts 1.25-26). It was a prayer of discernment.

In Acts 6, when it was time to expand the ministry of the local church in Jerusalem, the leaders called the membership together and asked them to nominate seven men "full of the Spirit and of wisdom" for this new task of ministry. And when the seven were chosen, the Apostles then prayed and laid hands upon them. The seeking of candidates "full of the Spirit" was a seeking of the Spirit's leading and calling, and seeking of God's will. It was a process of discernment. (Acts 6.1-6).

Throughout Acts, at every point of development of the new Christian Church, the Spirit was there doing the leading with the church members seeking the leading and following the Spirit's bidding. The Spirit led Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch to interpret God's word and baptize him (Acts 8.29). The Spirit led Paul and his companions to each and every city of his missionary journeys, even forbidding entry to some (Acts 19.21; 16.6-7).

Even at a crucial point in the development of the Church, when the earliest leaders and members had thought that God had only given salvation to the children of Israel, it was the Spirit who made it known to them through a careful process of examination of evidence and conversations and deliberations and reports that "God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11.1-18). This led to further discoveries of God's will for the Gentiles that did not require their observance of Jewish laws regarding food and circumcision (Acts 15). A decision by church leaders was made about this and a report of that decision sent to Gentile Christians in Antioch that stated very clearly how that decision was reached: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials..." (Acts 15.28).

The Church lived its life as a life of discernment. And as a result, “Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, the church increased in numbers” (Acts 9.31).

How did the Spirit lead? How was God’s will known? From Acts we see the Spirit coming to both individuals (11.12) and groups (2.1-4; 21.4). In Acts, the Spirit comes during worship and fasting (13.2), during prayer (10.9-16), in answered prayer (10.31), during the preaching of God’s word (10.44), at baptism (19.1-6), in the laying of hands (8.14-17), in visions (9.10-12; 10.3-6), as a voice heard (8.29; 10.19), as an insight (11.28), as a matter of reading the signs and interpreting events (11.1-18; 16.6-7; 20.22-23), and as reported above, within group processes of deliberation and conversation (Acts 11 and 15).

As it was for these first Christians, so it is for those in the Church today, whether seeking God’s vision and will for ministry or seeking a pastor for that ministry. And just as God came to a variety of members in a variety of ways, so also the Spirit will continue to come to those who believe and trust in God and listen for God’s voice.

## Some Basics about Discernment

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Through Holy Scripture and faith experience, all Christians have come to realize that knowing and doing God’s will is the best possible thing that can happen to them. And so Christians pray to God frequently, even daily, “Your kingdom come, your will be done,” as Jesus taught in the Lord’s Prayer.

While realizing that the Spirit will come and lead as the Spirit chooses, Christians over the centuries have come to know that there are some basics that can help in the discernment process:

1. Knowing our identity and calling will provide a foundation for being open to the Spirit’s leading. We are Christians, called into relationship with God and fellow believers and living in the unity of Spirit by the grace of Jesus Christ. Our identity and name not only says who we are, but whose we are as well. We are Christ’s, and therefore children of God.
2. Knowing our mission and purpose will also provide grounding and focus for the task of calling a pastor. The preparing of the *Congregational Ministry Site Profile* will help to detail both this congregation’s identity and purpose.
3. Shedding is a most important step for the success of discernment. The goal of discernment is to seek God’s will, not the will of any one person or group. Therefore shedding occurs in faith and trust and asks each participant to lay aside those things that would hinder the following of the Spirit’s leading. Shedding does not mean leaving behind one’s gifts, but rather allowing those gifts to be used by the Spirit. Shedding leaves behind personal gain or agenda for the sake of God’s will and the common good.
4. Rooting is important to discernment as it connects everyone with the word and activity of God. Rooting asks, “How does the Bible inform us regarding our mission and ministry and the calling of a pastor and shepherd? How does our tradition and history also inform us?” Rooting connects us with God and God’s work among us at the beginning of our task.
5. Listening is a premium in discerning God’s will. Listening hears the prompting of the Spirit, as well as the voices of all in the discerning community. Listening hears those who might be affected by decisions made. God will speak through these voices. But in order to hear them, one’s own voice may need to be silent more than heard. Listening is not confined simply to

call-related meetings and conversations. As was witnessed above in the book of Acts, the Spirit came at many times and in many ways and to many people, even at unexpected times. Therefore a whole posture of listening becomes important during the discernment and call process – in worship, in prayer, in conversation, in deliberation, in private devotions, in group Bible study, in preaching and teaching. Listening is a premium in discerning the leading of the Spirit.

6. Exploring is what will occur within the call process itself, especially at the time of the interviews by the Call Committee, the council and eventually the congregation. Exploring is how Christians come to know God's leading and includes sorting through options. As exemplified in Acts 6, exploring goes beyond skills and gifts to seek the spiritual. During an interview, exploring will ask, "Is the Spirit clearly evident in this candidate? Is this pastor's inner call and personal faith evident as well? Is the hand of God evident in the life and past ministry of this candidate? Is the Spirit leading this candidate to minister in this congregation and setting?"
7. Weighing is what comes after the interviews. In addition to the normal positives and negatives, pros and cons, that are identified, the Call Committee, the council and congregation seeks foremost to know what comes from God. What here leads toward God and not away from God? What is filled with human novelty or invention? Does the Spirit seem to rest on a particular individual or path? Weighing is not about democratic practice. Weighing is the spiritual process of identifying the Spirit's leading.
8. Deciding moves the process to the final test: is this choice the choice of God? Ignatius of Loyola, who founded the monastic order of the Society of Jesus in the 16th century and wrote a great deal about discernment, suggested that a decision based upon discernment will be filled with one of two things. Either it will be filled with *consolation* and movement toward God, assisting in loving God more. Or it will be filled with *desolation* and movement away from God, pulling people toward things that are other than godly.

In the end, the goal of discernment and the goal of the Call Process will be much as it was for those first Christians in the book of Acts. A Call Committee, council and congregation will want to be able to say, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..."

Resources persons are available through the Office of the Bishop to assist congregations, Call Committees and congregation councils to learn more about discernment in scripture and in Christian practice.

Leaders of the congregation might ask the interim pastor to lead a study of the book of Acts during the early part of the interim period.

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*Resource D*  
*Five Devotions on Discernment from the Book of Acts*  
*by the Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel*

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## **1. And the Lot Fell on Matthias**

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Read Acts 1:12-26.

This story follows the Ascension of Jesus into heaven and shows the process by which a new person was chosen to replace Judas the Betrayer for the ministry of the Twelve Apostles.

The story makes clear that there were more who believed in Jesus than just the Apostles. How many did they number? (1:15)

Peter takes the lead in the account and suggests a discernment process to follow.

What was the criteria for the candidate to be considered? 1:21-22

If Jesus' ministry from his baptism to his ascension was about three years long, then what are the implications of the criteria suggested by Peter?

How many candidates were settled upon that fulfilled the criteria? 1:23

Could there have been more? What do you think led them to put forward only two?

What was the next step in the process? 1:24

What specifically did the prayer ask for? 1:24c

The last step in the process was casting lots (1:26). Proverbs 16:33 says, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is the Lord's alone." Although this method of determining God's will was an old and venerable one, appearing 20 times in both Old and New Testaments, this was the last recorded use of casting lots in the Bible.

How do you see casting lots differing from taking a vote as we do today?

All human methods of determining or discerning God's will can be corrupted by the human element. What might be the advantages and disadvantages of casting lots for determining God's will? What might be the advantages and disadvantages of voting?

In the end, "the lot fell on Matthias, and he was added to the eleven apostles" (1:26).

Does this last verse indicate faith in the process and general agreement among all the believers that God's will had indeed been done?

In Acts 5:38-39, a Pharisee named Gamaliel makes a helpful statement about discernment, saying, "if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them--in that case you may even be found fighting against God!"

That suggests that there are signs that can be read during and after a process is complete that would indicate whether God's will has been done. What might be some of those signs that Matthias truly was God's choice? What might be signs that Matthias was not God's choice?

What do we learn from this passage about God's leading in our ministry?

Close this devotion with a prayer asking God to teach us how to listen with ears attuned to the Spirit and eyes open to the signs of God's leading.

## 2. Full of Wisdom & the Spirit

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Read Acts 6:1-8.

This story details some of the "growing pains" in the new ministry of the fledgling Christian community in Jerusalem as both numbers and ministry needs increased.

What is the "complaint" or conflict that had developed in the community? 6:1

In dividing out ministries, what ministry took priority for the Apostles themselves to do? 6:2 and 4?

Are there implications in these verses with regard to pastoral involvement in church administration? What might these be?

Bible interpreters have often identified this story as detailing the development of lay ministries within the church. The Apostles suggested specific criteria for fulfilling lay ministry in the church. What were these? 6:3

How do these criteria match our own understanding of lay ministry within our church? When Church Council or committee positions become vacant, how important are these kind of biblical criteria for choosing replacements?

What would be the outward signs that a person is "full of faith and the Holy Spirit" today? 6:5

Who actually chose the seven candidates for ministry of "daily distribution of food" -- the Apostles alone or the whole community? 6:5

What would be the importance of having the whole community involved in the choosing?

Notice that the complaint in 6:1 came from the Hellenists (Greeks) against the Hebrews, then notice that the names of the candidates put forth in 6:5 includes both Greeks and Hebrews. How would the good of the whole community be served by this?

Something of an installation service occurs in 6:6, presumably at worship. What are the individual elements of this rite of installation?

In the Bible, laying hands was a sign of several things: it was a setting apart of a person for service (Num. 8:10), a giving of authority (Num. 27:18-23), a sign of blessing (Mk. 10:14-16), a mode for healing (Mk. 5:23, Acts 28:8), and especially a conveyance of the Holy Spirit (Deut. 34:9, Acts 8:17), particularly related to Baptism (Acts 19:5-6). Which of these uses is being employed in this passage (6:6)?

Although this passage is a simple narrative of a problem and the resolution of that problem through a particular process, how might it be described as a discernment process? Where is the evidence of God's leading in the process?

As mentioned in the last lesson, signs of God's leading within a particular process become evident as time goes on. What are the signs that God blessed the process of the choosing of the seven? 6:7-8

What do we learn from this passage about God's leading in our ministry?

Close this devotion with a prayer asking God to teach us to look for signs of the Spirit and of wisdom and faith in those we encounter within the church.



### 3. Guided by the Spirit

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Read Acts 8:26-40.

In this passage, we see Philip being led in his ministry after being commissioned in Acts 6. Philip hears an "angel of the Lord" (8:26) and then "the Spirit" (8:29) speak to him in very specific ways with very specific directions. Can we take this "hearing" literally? In what ways do people "hear" the Spirit's leading? How do we know that it is the Spirit speaking? Jesus says in John 7:17, "Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God."

What did Philip discover on that "road from Jerusalem to Gaza" that made him realize that it truly had been the Spirit directing him there? 8:27-28

What is the result of this Spirit-led encounter with the eunuch? 8:38

8:39-40 says that "the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away" and he next found himself 15-20 miles away in Azotus. Is this a miraculous moving of Philip from one place to another? How similar is it to say, "The next thing I knew, I was in Albuquerque"? Is the emphasis in this passage on the manner of Philip's movement or on the author of that movement, the Spirit?

When we are following the Spirit's leading, are we fully conscious of it? What tells us if we are?

Read Acts 16:6-15.

This account details part of one of the missionary journeys of Paul. Paul had been called on the road to Damascus for this ministry (Acts 9) and set apart with prayer and laying of hands by the church at Antioch at the bidding of the Spirit (13:2-3).

What's striking in Acts 16:6-7 is the negative advice of the Spirit: forbidding preaching in Asia and not allowing Paul to enter Bithynia. While we normally think of how God positively leads us, this passage indicates that God lets us know what not to do as well.

How might God communicate that something is not the direction that we should take? What signs might be available to us of this? In 16:9, Paul has a vision "during the night." Are dreams and visions the same thing? How might they differ?

How does a person know if a vision or a dream is from God? Note in 16:10 that it was not simply Paul who was convinced of God's call in the vision; rather it says "we" were "convinced." This presumes that after Paul had the vision, he discussed it with his traveling companions to confirm his own feelings about it. In 1 Cor. 14:26-33, Paul is very specific in saying that "revelations" and "speaking in tongues" should always be "interpreted" and "weighed" by others for the purpose of "building up" the church. 1 John 4:1 similarly says "do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." Discerning God's will is a collaborative process in the church of the New Testament.

How might we go about testing visions and revelations and insights today? What did Paul and his party find when they went to Macedonia that served as confirmation of God's leading? 16:13-15

What do we learn from these passages about God's leading in our ministry?

Close this devotion with a prayer asking God to teach us how to read both negative and positive signs of the Spirit's leading.

## 4. Reading Multiple Signs

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Read Acts 11:1-18.

The entrance of the Gentiles (non-Jewish people) into the Christian Church was the first major test of God's leading encountered in the fledgling church and is described in detail in Acts 11 and Acts 15. The first Christians had been Jews ("circumcised believers"), just as Jesus had been.

What is the posture of these circumcised believers in Judean church? 11:2-3

How might such behavior lead to conflict in a congregation?

Peter's response is to describe his own discernment process "step by step" as it included multiple signs indicating the welcome of the Gentiles. What is the first sign that Peter describes? 11:5-9 What was Peter's sense of the origin of this sign? 11:9 How many times did this sign occur? 11:10 What was the second sign that Peter encountered? 11:11-12a Peter was told of a third sign that someone else saw. What was that sign? 11:13-14 What was the fourth sign that Peter witnessed? 11:15

The fifth sign came in the form of a memory of Jesus' words, 11:16. In John 14:26, Jesus had promised the disciples that "the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you."

Did Peter witness and read these signs alone? No, 11:12b. Note, as discovered in the last devotion, discernment is a collaborative process.

What was Peter's conclusion from all these signs? 11:17 Did the assembled church in Jerusalem agree with Peter's conclusion about the signs? 11:18

Could they have continued to criticize and oppose Peter? Remember Gamaliel's advice in Acts 5:38-39, "if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them--in that case you may even be found fighting against God!"

Drawing conclusions from this passage, if God is calling the church to a new ministry or path: How many signs are likely to point to it? How many people are likely to see it? What will be the place of scripture in relation to the signs? cf. 11:16 How important is interpretation in reading signs and drawing conclusions for direction? Can interpretation be wrong? What would assure that interpretation is not wrong?

In this story, the "circumcised believers," who would have been the majority in the Christian church of that day, were not happy in 11:2 about the influx of the uncircumcised Gentiles. In 11:18, their criticisms were "silenced." What does this say about personal agendas, fears, prejudices when it comes to discernment?

Will a discernment process always "silence" or "convince" (16:10) everyone? In Acts 15:1, some from the Judean church tried to convince the Gentiles that they had to observe Jewish tradition in order to "be saved." Another meeting of the church was necessary (15:6-28) to finalize the matter.

What do we learn from these passages about God's leading in our ministry?

Close this devotion with a prayer asking God to assist us in using scripture to interpret signs of the Spirit's leading.

## 5. How the Spirit Comes to Us

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In previous devotions, we have seen signs of the Spirit's leading in many and various ways. Assign each of the passages below to a different member of your group. Then have each member share with others how the passage describes the Spirit's leading in that particular situation:

- Acts 4:8-10 - The Spirit comes to individuals
- Acts 2:1-4 - The Spirit comes to groups
- Acts 13:2-3 - The Spirit comes during worship and fasting
- Acts 22:17-18 - The Spirit comes during prayer
- Acts 10:30-32 - The Spirit comes in answered prayer
- Acts 10:44-48 - The Spirit comes during the preaching of God's word
- Acts 11:16 - The Spirit comes in recalling Jesus' words (= scripture)
- Acts 19:1-6 - The Spirit comes at baptism
- Acts 8:14-17 - The Spirit comes in the laying of hands
- Acts 9:10-12 - The Spirit comes in visions
- Acts 10:19-20 - The Spirit comes as a voice heard
- Acts 11:27-28 - The Spirit comes as an insight
- Acts 20:22-23 - The Spirit comes as a matter of reading the signs and interpreting events
- Acts 15:6-28 - The Spirit comes within group processes of deliberation and conversation

Can our own egos and desires speak louder than the Spirit? Consider Jonah 1:1-3

Will signs and visions always be from God? No. Acts 19:13-16

What is the place of scripture in helping to interpret such signs? Acts 11:15-17

Multiple signs pointing to the same thing and collaborative process will also help to test signs.

What do we learn from these passages about God's leading in our ministry?

Close this devotion with a prayer thanking God giving us insight into discernment and the leading of the Spirit.

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## SECTION 5

# *Developing the Congregational Ministry Site Profile & Seven Reflections on Ministry and Context*

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### **Developing the Congregational Ministry Site Profile (MSP)**

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The significant task of leading the congregation in developing the Congregational Ministry Site Profile is entrusted to the call committee.

The Congregational Ministry Site Profile provides an important document for those involved in the call process:

- The congregation is given the opportunity to carefully study its history and direction and to articulate more clearly its mission and ministry priorities.
- The call committee and the Office of the Bishop receive valuable and necessary information for their important work of identifying leadership priorities and needs, and matching this information with the gifts and skills of potential pastoral candidates.
- The potential pastoral candidates with a comprehensive picture of the congregation and its mission and plans as these candidates consider being open to a Call to this congregation.

Therefore, it is most important that the council and call committee assure that appropriate time to thoughtfully and carefully produce an excellent Congregational Ministry Site Profile is encouraged. The completed mission profile should be neat and attractive, possibly including the use of pictures and attachments.

### **Some Valuable Benefits of Completing the Ministry Site Profile & Seven Reflections on Ministry and Context**

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There are some very important benefits of engaging the congregation in this self-study:

- The life and mission of the congregation is reviewed and celebrated;
- The congregation's sense of identity and call from God are renewed;
- The members evaluate together congregational strengths and growth areas;
- The congregation more clearly articulates its mission both within the church and in the community/world;
- The congregation's relationship with the greater church is celebrated;

AND, the members of the congregation identify gifts and skills that they feel are most important for their next pastor to possess!

## **Part I: Develop the Congregational Ministry Site Profile**

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

While the call committee is charged with the overall responsibility for the development of the Ministry Site Profile, the committee needs to be in consultation with the council, other congregational leaders and staff, and the members of the congregation to more fully and accurately complete each part of the profile. (See "Role of the Call Committee," par. 2, Section 3, Page 1.) The Ministry Site Profile is divided into five parts with each part addressing different aspects or areas of the congregation's life and leadership needs.

The call committee will need to review the entire document before attempting to answer questions in any part of the profile. As the committee reads through the profile, it will be helpful to begin identifying persons outside of the committee whose input would be helpful to answer a particular question or section. One particular piece of the mission profile, Part III – Leadership Needs, will involve the whole congregation.

Also helpful is to do the research by locating, for example, your congregation's annual reports. The Congregational Ministry Site Profile will ask you to summarize information on your congregation and community. This information, found in your congregation's current Congregational Trend Report and Demographic Data for Your Zip Code Report, is immediately available through the Department for Research and Evaluation. (You may also get the demographic data that your congregational council downloaded from MissionInsite prior to the formation of the call committee. Section 2, "Claiming a clear identity...", Page 6.)

The ELCA website provides an introduction to the call process with helpful downloadable documents on the MSP and video tutorials at <https://www.elca.org/call>. This is also the portal for the online Ministry Site Profile (choose "Ministry Site"). The optional form "Seven Reflections on Ministry and Context" can also be reviewed at Resource C at the end of this section.

## **Surveying the Congregation**

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For the completion of Part III: Leadership Needs, Number 11, Top Five Ministry Tasks, and Number 12, Gifts for Ministry, it is particularly important that the call committee invite the greatest participation by members.

Numbers 11 and 12 may be sent to all members through a congregational mailing requesting that it be returned by a certain date to the church office; or the sections may be distributed at worship services for several consecutive Sundays; or time might be set aside at the end of worship services on a particular Sunday announced in advance when members would be invited to complete the sections and return them before leaving. Regardless of the means by which the sections are completed, the objective is to get responses from the greatest number of persons possible. It may be that some would complete the sections at the church, while others would prefer to take them home for additional time to reflect. Both ways are quite acceptable.

These sections are among the most valuable sections in the Congregational Ministry Site Profile in order to identify and seek these gifts in a rostered leader's ministry.

## Putting Together the Survey

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The call committee will need to copy Numbers 11 & 12 of the Congregational Ministry Site Profile. These pages could be copied front to back to save paper.

Also included in this section of the manual is a ***Suggested Cover Letter for the Survey*** (Resource A) that may be adapted by the call committee to help explain to the members of the congregation the procedure for completing the survey. The committee will want to be sure to include a deadline date for returning the forms and the collection point for the completed surveys.

After the results of the survey have been tabulated, the call committee may wish to share a summary of the results with the whole congregation prior to the completion of the whole Congregational Ministry Site Profile. Congregational feedback could be invited.

## Tabulation of the Survey Results for Numbers 11 & 12

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In Section 11, the top five ministry tasks that are checked most often by the congregation are then identified as the “top five ministry tasks” by the members of the congregation. Follow the same tabulation process for Section 12 to identify the 5 Top Priorities and 5 Very Helpful Gifts. The call committee may not agree with the consensus of the membership, but it is best to reflect the desires and perceptions of the whole congregation. If the committee wishes to communicate additional information about the survey results, further explanation, input or clarification can be added in Part IV: Commentary.

## Draft Profile

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When the call committee has prepared the first draft of the completed Congregational Ministry Site Profile, copies of the draft should be shared with the Office of the Bishop for review and possible editing suggestions.

A representative of the Office of the Bishop will then schedule a meeting with the call committee. Following this editing step, a copy of the new approved draft is given to the council for review and approval. The shared objective is to produce the most representative and accurate Congregational Ministry Site Profile for the congregation.

## The Final Version of the Congregational Ministry Site Profile

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The final Ministry Site Profile (MSP) is electronically submitted to the ELCA database. The call committee is encouraged to make additional copies available to members of the congregation by posting it or having it available at a table after worship for several weeks.

## Part II: Develop Seven Reflections on Ministry & Context

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**The Seven Reflections on Ministry and Context (Resource C)** provides additional information about your congregation’s mission and vision for the candidates. While the form is listed as optional on the ELCA website, the Florida-Bahamas Synod requires that the Seven Reflections on Ministry and Context be completed. Please complete these seven questions (online and through your congregation’s Congregational Ministry Site Profile account) once you have completed the entire Congregational Ministry Site Profile.

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## Resource A

# *Suggested Cover Letter for Survey*

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*Date*

*Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,*

*The Call Committee is requesting your assistance. It is time for us to discern the Top 5 Ministry Tasks and Gifts for ministry that our new pastor will need to lead us into the future of God's calling for the congregation and the community we serve. Attached you will find copies of two pages from the Congregational Ministry Site Profile which your Call Committee is working to complete. These two pages contain a list of 40 Ministry Tasks and 25 Gifts for ministry.*

*You are asked in Section II to select the 5 most critical tasks required in this position. In Section 12 you are asked to identify 5 gifts for ministry that are a top priority for the rostered leader to provide (left column) and 5 more gifts that you think would be helpful (right column).*

*Thank you for taking the time to complete and return this survey to the church office (or other collection point). The deadline for returning the survey is Sunday, (Date). We will tabulate the results from all the surveys that are received to determine a composite picture of our greatest priorities, the most important skills, and the areas of most essential need.*

*Yours in Christ,*

*Chairperson, Call Committee*

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**Important Note: This form has been converted to an online web-based form, please use this for preparation only. You must submit the official application via the Leader Portal. See <http://www.elca.org/call> for more details.**



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

## MINISTRY SITE PROFILE

The Ministry Site Profile (MSP) is intended for use by congregations and church-related organizations that are seeking to call an Ordained or lay rostered minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or First Call candidates for rostered ministry. Congregations must complete the entire Ministry Site Profile. Church-related organizations may, with the concurrence of the synod bishop, complete only the required sections (1-4 and 8-19). Once complete, this form is submitted electronically to your synod bishop for review and posting to the "ministry opportunities" listing on the ELCA web Site.

Date Completed:

### PART I WHO WE ARE

#### 1. Name and Location

CONGREGATION/ MULTIPLE POINT PARISH/ ORGANIZATION	NAME	CONG ID
CITY, STATE, ZIP	COUNTRY	
SYNOD	TYPE OF MINISTRY SITE	YEAR ORGANIZED
SIZE OF COMMUNITY		

#### 2. Contact Information

ADDRESS LINE I	ADDRESS LINE II	CITY, STATE, ZIP	COUNTRY
E-MAIL	WEB SITE	PHONE	FAX
<b>Chairperson of Congregation or Head of the Organization</b>			
NAME			
ADDRESS LINE I	ADDRESS LINE II	CITY, STATE, ZIP	COUNTRY
DAY PHONE	EVENING PHONE	CELL PHONE	FAX
E-MAIL			

#### Chairperson of Call or Search Committee

NAME			
ADDRESS LINE I	ADDRESS LINE II	CITY, STATE, ZIP	COUNTRY
DAY PHONE	EVENING PHONE	CELL PHONE	FAX



# SEVEN REFLECTIONS ON MINISTRY AND CONTEXT

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## MINISTRY SITE PROFILE

Date Completed:

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Date Posted:

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*This questionnaire is optional unless specifically required by your synod's call process administrator(s). Once complete, it will be attached to your Ministry Site Profile. You may choose as many of the following questions as you wish, with four of the seven as a suggested number of responses. Give short, reflective answers. ( Approximate length is 200 words. Space is limited to the size of the box and fields do not expand. )*

### NAME AND LOCATION

Name

City

State / Province

ZIP / Postal Code

Congregation ID

- 
1. What key issues or concerns of our church and society are reflected in the ministry that is centered in your congregation or organization?

2. How do the stewardship practices and allocation of financial resources of the congregation or organization reflect your priorities for mission?

3. In what ways is the membership of your congregation or organization similar or different from the people of the neighborhood in which you are located?

4. Identify the three most significant or formative events in the history of your congregation or organization.

5. Describe the way the congregation or organization is currently involved in community and ecumenical partnerships.

6. Has your congregation or organization had significant conflict in recent history and, if so, what have you learned from that experience?

7. Describe your physical facilities: construction date, purpose, capacity, date of last renovation, any deferred maintenance, and any plans for upgrading.

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## SECTION 6

# *Pastoral Candidates and the Call List*

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### Sources of Names for Potential Candidates

There are three primary sources of names of pastors for consideration by the Office of Bishop as the bishop prepares a call list for the congregation:

- **From within the congregation:** These names are submitted by members to the call committee and the call committee will forward the compiled list to the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership, along with the completed Congregational Ministry Site Profile.
- **From the active mobility listings:** Pastors from across the church who are interested in a new call have uploaded their Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) onto the ELCA database. Bishops and their assistants have access to this internal database.
- **From personal knowledge:** The Office of the Bishop has personal knowledge of pastors whose gifts may be a good match for a particular congregation even though these pastors have not indicated interest in mobility. The bishop may contact such persons.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has established specific procedures for contacting pastoral candidates for placement on call lists of congregations. It is the responsibility of the Office of the Bishop to make such contacts and it is improper for congregations to contact pastors directly, or for pastors to contact congregations directly about call possibilities.

### Developing the Call List

Upon receiving the completed Congregational Ministry Site Profile, the Office of the Bishop begins a discernment process to determine the best candidates to be placed upon the call list of the congregation. The bishop and others in the Office of the Bishop prayerfully work to match the desires and needs of the congregation with the best pastoral candidates. It is a great joy to witness the working of the Holy Spirit through the call process bringing together the new pastor and congregation.

Using the Congregational Ministry Site Profile as a primary guide, the Office of the Bishop gives careful consideration of the pastoral leadership needs of the congregation. A list of potential and qualified candidates is formulated. From this list, the candidates that best match the needs of the congregation are identified and the Office of the Bishop begins the process of contacting potential candidates. Usually three candidates are identified for contact by the Office of the Bishop, although special circumstances and availability sometimes leads to a call list with only one or two names.

With the permission of the bishops of the synods where the pastors are presently serving, the Office of the Bishop contacts the potential candidates. If they express interest in considering this particular call, a copy of the Congregational Ministry Site Profile is sent to them for review. After reviewing the profile, the candidates inform the Office of the Bishop of their desire to be placed on the call list. Sometimes candidates request up to a week to review the mission profile, discuss the possibility of a move with their families and seek God's guidance in the decision to have their names placed on the call list.

If a candidate declines to have his/her name placed on the call list, the Office of the Bishop seeks the next best candidate to be added to the call list. This process takes many weeks and is delayed when candidates withdraw from consideration. There are personal and professional reasons why a candidate may decide not to be considered for a particular call situation. The Office of the Bishop can at times share the reasons why a candidate is not available for consideration; at other times, confidentiality may preclude such sharing.

Pastoral candidates are able to be on multiple call lists, including those in other synods, until they reach the point of being the primary candidate for a congregation. At this point they must withdraw from all other call lists.

### **When Members and Friends Lift Up Names of Potential Pastoral Candidates**

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It is not unusual for members or friends within the congregation to want to make a suggestion of a pastor whom they feel might make a good pastoral candidate. The call committee should share in an announcement or article to the congregation the following guidelines for making suggestions of potential candidates:

- All suggestions of names of pastors will be retained by the call committee and given to the bishop for consideration at the same time that the completed Congregational Ministry Site Profile is given to the bishop.
- In addition to the name of the pastor, it is helpful to provide the pastor's current congregation or address, if known, and a brief comment about why this pastor is being recommended for consideration.
- Absolutely NO CONTACT of pastors regarding their possible interest in the position should be made by members of the call committee, council or congregation. The bishop will give prayerful consideration to all pastoral candidates suggested by the congregation as well as other potential pastoral candidates.
- It is the responsibility of the bishop and the assistants to the bishop to prayerfully form a call list usually consisting of the names of three pastors.
- ONLY those candidates whose names are placed on the Call List will be contacted by the Call Committee.

### **First Call Candidates**

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Sometimes the Office of the Bishop will approach a congregation about considering a first call candidate (a recent graduate from seminary who is not yet ordained). The congregation council will be asked to give approval to the call committee and the Office of the Bishop to proceed in such a direction. The call committee will then receive the name of the first call candidate as a single name call list for interview and decision to recommend or not recommend the candidate to the council.

Should the congregation vote to call a first call candidate, an ordination service involving the bishop is needed in addition to an installation service. The ordination service is usually planned by the person being ordained and the Office of the Bishop and is sometimes held in a location apart from the calling congregation. In such a situation, an installation service will be planned at the congregation sometime after the candidate's ordination. At other times, the ordination service and the installation service will be combined into one service.



## **Filling Rostered Positions in a Multi-Staff Situation**

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If there is more than one pastoral vacancy in a congregation, the senior pastor position will be filled first. The call committee's work focuses upon the leadership gifts needed in this position. Sometime after the new senior pastor has arrived and begun his/her ministry, the congregation, with the involvement of the senior pastor, and the Office of the Bishop may determine to initiate the process of calling an additional pastor. The council develops clear position descriptions for each rostered leader. It is understood that the senior pastor will serve as the head and supervisor of the ministry team. A new call committee is appointed for the calling of a second rostered person, and the senior pastor will serve on this call committee.

An exception to this policy is when there is the possibility of calling a clergy couple to serve as co-pastors of the congregation. In such situations, the Office of the Bishop approaches the congregation to determine their interest in calling a clergy couple and how responsibilities will be shared.

It is recommended that those on the pastoral staff, and possibly the entire staff, participate in a team ministry retreat or workshop once all members of the pastoral staff are in place.

## **Calling an Associate or Assistant Pastor**

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The process for calling an associate or assistant pastor follows the same procedures as the calling of a senior pastor except that the senior pastor is involved both in the process as a member of the call committee and in consultation with the Office of the Bishop regarding potential candidates.

The policy of the Florida-Bahamas Synod is that those serving in the roles of associate or assistant pastors, regardless of particular title, will be co-terminus with the senior pastor. Upon the resignation of the senior pastor, associate and assistant pastors will also submit their resignations to become effective no later than six months after the arrival of the new senior/lead pastor. The call documents will reflect this policy. The new senior pastor should be involved directly in building his/her new staff, which may or may not include additional pastors. The resource, *Team Ministry Calls*, is included at the end of this Section 6.

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## *Resource A*

# *Team Ministry Calls*

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A Team Ministry is formed when more than one rostered person is called to serve within the same congregation or ministry setting. Team ministries work best when an environment is created in which respect, trust, cooperation, and collegiality is encouraged. Team ministries may include multiple numbers of pastors and deacons each called by the congregation for particular ministry. It is understood that the Senior/Lead Pastor is called to a position of greater responsibility for oversight and serves as the head of the staffing team.

Some important characteristics of healthy team ministries:

- All team members understand that they are called by God to serve in their particular roles
- Each team member prays for and respects the other team members
- Clear position descriptions are developed describing the responsibilities and accountability of each member of the team
- Team members possess skills and gifts that complement one another

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### **Call Processes**

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#### **Senior/Lead Pastor:**

- If there is more than one pastoral vacancy within a congregation, the senior/lead pastor position will be filled first.
- The regular call process is followed.
- The senior/lead pastor will be in place when a team ministry is formed. An exception is when a clergy couple is called to serve the congregation as co-pastors.

#### **Associate (Assistant) Pastor:**

- An associate (or assistant) pastor is understood to be fully a pastor of the congregation with a complete Word and Sacrament ministry even if that person is called to a position with specific program or ministry responsibilities.
- The senior/lead pastor will serve on the call committee for an associate pastor.
- Position descriptions for the senior/lead pastor and additional pastor(s) will be developed.
- The position descriptions will be included in the Congregational Ministry Site Profile that is developed by the call committee.
- When the congregation is asked to complete the Top 5 Ministry Tasks and Gifts survey, a copy of the associate pastor's position description should be included in the mailing to assist them in determining what gifts and skills might be best needed by the associate pastor.
- The calls of associate pastors will be coterminous with the call of the senior/lead pastor. The call document will reflect this policy of the Florida-Bahamas Synod.
- When the call of the senior/lead pastor ends, associate pastors submit their resignations effective no later than six months after the arrival of the new senior/lead pastor.
- The call documents should also state that associate pastors will not be available for the senior/lead pastor call should that position become open while the associate pastor is under call to this congregation.
- In exceptional cases, for the sake of mission and in consultation with the Office of the Bishop, the new lead/senior pastor and the council may evaluate the pastoral staffing configuration in light of current ministry needs and determine if an invitation will be made for the staff pastor(s) to remain on staff.

**Deacons:**

- The senior/lead pastor will serve on the call committee for deacons.
- Position descriptions for the deacon, the senior pastor and other rostered leaders of the congregation will be developed.
- The position descriptions will be included in the Congregational Ministry Site Profile that is developed by the call committee.
- When the congregation is asked to complete the Top 5 Ministry Tasks and Gifts survey, a copy of the deacon's position description should be included in the mailing to assist them in determining what gifts and skills might be best needed of the deacon.
- The calls of deacons will be coterminous with the call of the senior/lead pastor. The call document will reflect this policy of the Florida-Bahamas Synod.
- When the call of the senior/lead pastor ends, deacons submit their resignation effective no later than six months after the arrival of the new senior/lead pastor.
- In exceptional cases, for the sake of mission and in consultation with the Office of the Bishop, the new lead/senior pastor and the council may evaluate the pastoral staffing configuration in light of current ministry needs and determine if an invitation will be made for the deacon to remain on staff.



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## SECTION 7

# *The Interview Process*

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### Receiving the Call List

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A representative of the Office of the Bishop will normally email the call list of candidate names and their Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) to the chair of the call committee, although on occasion the names might be delivered personally. After the list is transmitted, the bishop's representative will review the interview process as well as the interview covenant (Resource A) with the call committee chair. The call committee will want to carefully read the information received about the potential candidates. Each candidate should be treated equally and fairly regardless of first impressions received from printed materials. The face-to-face interview can impact the committee's perception of a candidate.

Upon receiving the call list, the call committee members should reaffirm their commitment to confidentiality. The names and information about the candidates are NOT to be shared with spouse/partner, family, council members, or anyone else outside of the call committee. All committee members, particularly the chair and recorder, will be guarded in all their communications within the committee regarding candidate names, locations and other information about them. The committee also determines what might be included in the interview process beyond the personal interview itself. *This might include visits by a team from the call committee to the present churches of candidates to hear them preach. (Arrangements can be made through the Office of the Bishop to hear a candidate preach who is not presently serving in a congregation.)*

### Setting Up the Interview Dates and Process

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Within two days of receiving the call list, the call committee makes a telephone call to each candidate to invite the candidate for the interview. The date, place, and anticipated length of the interview are worked out with each candidate. It should be noted that telephone interviews are ***strongly discouraged*** since that is a most difficult means of developing a relationship and fully learning about another person.

It is helpful to remember that the pastoral candidates are also in a discernment process and during the interview experience, they are carefully listening to the members of the call committee to learn more about the congregation and its mission.

When agreement to interview has been received from the candidate(s), the contact person for the call committee should indicate that a letter with details will follow and ask each candidate for his/her preferred mailing address and/or email contact information. The Call Committee may conduct an initial "get to know you" interview with the candidate. Be mindful to keep the meeting under 90 minutes. Additional questions may be asked during the formal in-person interview.

### Confirming the Interview and Arrangements

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A letter, or email, which promptly follows the phone conversation inviting a candidate to interview, confirms the place, time and expected length of the interview.

It is recommended that the first interview be with the pastor candidate only. If the pastor desires to bring along his/her spouse/partner, the congregation is not under obligation to pay for their travel expenses, but may offer to do so if finances will permit.

[NOTE: After a candidate is identified as the Primary Candidate, it is encouraged that the spouse/partner accompany the candidate for the interview with the congregation council. During that visit, there is usually opportunity to meet many other members of the congregation.]

The confirmation letter should contain information about who will meet the pastor at the airport, if the pastor is flying, or travel directions to the place of lodging. If the candidate is being asked to lead a devotional at the start of the interview, the letter should indicate this with clarity about expectations regarding length and format.

The letter should also affirm the congregation's commitment to provide reimbursement for all expenses related to the pastor's coming for the interview. Prompt reimbursement should be made to the candidate following the interview.

Interview packets may be prepared and sent to each candidate prior to the interview. The packet could include items not included in the Ministry Site Profile such as a listing of the names of all the call committee members, a recent annual report, a congregational directory, worship bulletins, newsletters, a listing of staff and congregation council members, and the congregation's constitution and bylaws. The Chamber of Commerce may have a welcome packet with community information that might be shared as well.

## Hosting the Candidates

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One or two members of the call committee should be designated to serve as host(s) for the candidates. This often is the chair of the call committee and one additional person. The hosts will meet and welcome each of the candidates to town and share the general itinerary of their time together.

If overnight accommodations are needed for any of the candidates, arrangements at a motel should be made by the call committee with the room charge pre-paid by the congregation. Because of boundary and privacy concerns, pastor candidates should NOT be invited to stay in the homes of call committee members. The hosts will assist each candidate with check-in and clarify pick-up times. The candidate is escorted to the place of the dinner, the site of the interview, and then back to the place of lodging.

The hosts may also arrange for each candidate to have opportunity to tour the church facilities at times when it would be unlikely that staff or other congregational members would be present. Pastoral candidates are very interested in seeing the worship space, offices and facilities.

It is helpful for the committee to arrange for a tour of the greater community pointing out schools and places of interest. If the candidate(s) does not drive a personal car to the interview, it is a wonderful gesture to provide the candidates with the use of a car for personal touring of the area as time is available.

An informal dinner for the candidate and members of the committee prior to the interview serves the good purpose of helping to establish relationships and engage in informal conversation about families and communities.

The same hosts or perhaps two others from the call committee may be designated to meet the candidates the following morning for breakfast and transportation to the airport, or to provide a closure to the interview if the candidate is driving his or her own car.

## A Practice Interview

---

The call committee may wish to do a “practice interview” using the interim pastor, a representative of the Office of the Bishop, or a neighboring pastor as the person being interviewed. A practice interview helps the committee to review its plan, sharpen the questions the committee desires to ask, and receive feedback about the experience from the one being interviewed in the practice interview.

The practice interview should be conducted as if it were a real interview with preparation done in advance. Plan ahead who will ask which question and what materials the committee will use to evaluate and assess the candidates. It is helpful to loan the pastor assisting in this practice interview a copy of the Congregational Ministry Site Profile in advance of the interview so he/she can also ask some fitting questions of the call committee. It is appropriate that an honorarium be given to the pastor equal to the amount paid to a supply pastor on a Sunday morning (the council should be able to provide information on this amount). If the Call Committee plans to meet the Candidate by Zoom prior to the in-person interview, it is highly recommended that the Call Committee also ask the pastor to do a practice Zoom interview with the Call Committee.

## The Interview Site

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Since it is desirable to interview each candidate in a similar fashion, it is recommended that all the interviews be held at the same location. A comfortable and informal atmosphere is preferred. The home of one of the call committee’s members may be able to accommodate the candidate and all the members of the call committee for the interviews. If a home is not available, then consider a comfortable room at a nearby facility or the church. Refreshments should be served.

For each of the interviews, arrangements should be made with the candidate for transportation from the place of lodging to the place of interview. If the interview must be conducted at the church because of space, the call committee needs to assure that privacy and confidentiality are maintained. During the interview stage, it is not appropriate to introduce the candidates to other members of the church or to staff persons.

(NOTE: When a primary candidate has been recommended to the council, the council will introduce that candidate to congregational members and to the church staff if the council has voted to recommend the candidate to the congregation.)

## Planning the Interview

---

The call committee will want to keep in mind its critical task of discerning God’s will for the congregation and its pastoral leadership. The committee should consider important questions that they desire to ask each candidate, keeping in mind the leadership priorities and needs identified in the mission profile. Determine in advance who will ask which questions.

This helps to provide consistency and clear opportunities for comparisons of responses by the candidates. Sample questions are provided in a resource entitled Questions a Call Committee May Ask found at the end of this section. Consider some questions that will give insight into the candidate’s faith and sense of calling.

Good questions will solicit valuable information about a candidate’s past experiences, behaviors and ministry endeavors that might suggest what the candidate is likely to do again.

Questions that require only yes or no answers should be avoided. Asking follow up questions will help a candidate clarify answers. This also demonstrates that the committee is truly interested and seeking to understand what the candidate is saying.

When planning the interview, the committee should allow adequate time for the pastoral candidate to ask his/her own questions about the ministry of the church. This is a mutual interview process.

It is extremely important for the effective functioning of the call committee and in fairness to each candidate that all call committee members be present at each interview. For the interviews, members of the call committee should wear clothing similar to what is worn at Sunday morning worship. It is recommended that call committee members also wear name tags to assist the candidates. The length of time to be given to the whole interview should be determined in advance, announced at the start of the interview, and monitored by the chair.

## Conducting the Interview

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After gathering with refreshments and making informal introductions, the chair or the one designated to lead the interviews gathers the call committee and candidate together in a circle of chairs. If the candidate has been asked to lead devotions, the chair invites the candidate to do so. Otherwise, a member of the committee leads an opening devotional.

Each member of the call committee may share briefly some personal information about family, career and involvement within the congregation. The chair may ask the candidate to share “something about yourself” to provide opportunity for personal introduction.

The chair then reviews the plan for the interview including the general time parameters and shares with the candidate that his/her questions will also be welcomed throughout the interview. It is a courtesy to indicate to the candidate that members of the committee may be taking notes to assist with recalling comments after the interview.

The committee now asks the questions prepared in advance of the interview and listens carefully to the responses, asking for clarifications as needed. The chair helps to move the group along in a timely fashion. When the formal questions are completed, the chair invites the candidate to ask any questions that might be helpful to the candidate. A listing of questions, *Questions Candidates May Ask*, is included in the resources at the end of this section.

In concluding the interview, the chair may invite any additional questions or comments that anyone might like to share. The candidate is thanked for coming and participating in the interview. The chair indicates that the candidate may contact the chair should any additional questions or concerns arise in the days following the interview. The time together is closed with prayer. The hosts escort the candidate back to the place of lodging.

## Reflections on the Interview

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It is often desirable to schedule brief meetings of the call committee following each interview, especially if there is extended time between interviews. Members of the call committee can share their impressions and responses to the interview while the candidate’s responses are still fresh in the minds of the members. Behavioral observations, highlights and concerns are also shared and recorded for later reference following the completion of all interviews. Further discussion and decisions about seeing the candidates lead worship and preach may be beneficial at this point.



## Selecting the Primary Candidate

---

The call committee has the holy responsibility and privilege of representing the congregation in discerning which candidate may lead the congregation in its mission and ministry.

Promptly following the conclusion of the interviews, the committee gathers to determine whether they are led by God's Spirit to present one of the candidates to the council for further interview and possible recommendation to the congregation for Call. The committee prays together asking for the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Complete agreement and consensus on one particular candidate may not be possible by the call committee. However, each member's thoughts, reflections and impressions should be respectfully received. It is particularly important to listen carefully to any on the committee who may be disagreeing with the majority. Remember that God speaks to us through our common voices and is present "where two or three are gathered in my name" (Matthew 20.18).

A suggested way to proceed is to review the top leadership needs of the congregation and reflect upon each candidate in relationship to each leadership need. Review responses to the questions that were asked by the committee during the interviews and those asked by the candidates. Consider perceived strengths and weaknesses.

Test the thinking of the call committee by sharing around the circle each member's perception of each candidate answering the question "What is the Spirit telling you about this candidate?" Share concerns as well as positives. Members may then be invited to share the candidate that is their preference. If there is not full consensus, invite further conversation.

Asking for the Spirit's guidance, the call committee should determine if there is enough consensus on one candidate to present that candidate to the council as the primary candidate for consideration as the next pastor of the congregation.

If a candidate receives majority support in a call committee vote, then he/she becomes the "Primary Candidate," and the name of that candidate, along with the materials related to that candidate, are presented to the council. At the time the chair presents the name to the council, other members of the call committee may also be present to answer questions about the candidate selected and reasons for the selection.

The identities and mobility papers of the other candidates remain confidential and are not shared with the council but returned to the Office of the Bishop or collected and destroyed by the call committee chair.

## No Candidate Selected

---

If the call committee declines to forward one of the candidates to the council, then a decision is reached to release all candidates under consideration and to request a new call list from the Office of the Bishop. This decision and the reasons for the decision are shared with the council and the Office of the Bishop. The committee chair is charged with the responsibility of contacting the Office of the Bishop to request a review followed by a new call list.

A representative of the Office of the Bishop will usually meet with the call committee and a representative of the council to review expectations and determine what additional traits or qualities the committee may be seeking in the candidates for the next call list.

## Follow-up Contact with Each Candidate Released

---

The call committee should send a letter of appreciation to all candidates thanking them for their willingness to be interviewed. A sample letter, *Release of a Candidate*, is included in the resources at the end of this section. It is helpful to share with the candidates specific reasons why the candidate was not identified as the Primary Candidate.

It is crucial that the call committee immediately notify candidates who are no longer under consideration for the position of pastor of this congregation. The release of candidates should also be communicated to the representative of the Office of the Bishop assisting the committee in this process. This prompt response not only informs the candidate but also makes it possible for that candidate to be considered in a different call situation.

Any expense reimbursement not made at the time of the interview should be included with this letter. Mobility papers for the other candidates are either returned to the dean or are to be shredded locally by the call committee chair.

## A Pastor Withdraws from the Process

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Sometimes a pastoral candidate will decide to withdraw his/her name from further consideration in a congregation following the interview with the call committee, or even further along in the call process. The candidate's reasons may be for personal or professional and are most often shared with the call committee.

On occasion, a candidate will withdraw from the process because of troubling insights or concerns regarding the congregation's health, vision or ministry. Normally a representative of the Office of the Bishop will meet with the call committee and a representative of the council to discuss the concerns raised and to determine any needed direction. The concerns may need to be addressed before proceeding further into the call process.

Upon learning of the withdrawal of the candidate, the Office of the Bishop will work with the congregation to resume the call process as soon as feasible and possible.

## The Primary Candidate

---

The chair of the call committee will want to immediately notify the pastoral candidate who has been selected as the Primary Candidate in order to congratulate him/her on behalf of the committee. The chair informs the Primary Candidate of plans to present the candidate's name to the congregation council and indicates that the council president or a representative of the council will be contacting the candidate soon to set dates to interview with the council. This notification should be by phone and could be followed by a letter of appreciation. Any expense reimbursement not made at the time of the interview should be included with this letter.

After presenting the name of the Primary Candidate to the council, the call committee entrusts the call process to the members of the council. The call committee remains available for assistance and for resumption of duties should the Primary Candidate not be approved by the council or if the candidate withdraws from the process.

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## *Resource A*

# *Interview Covenant: Call Committee*

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The call committee of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church in \_\_\_\_\_ and the Florida-Bahamas Synod through Office of the Bishop commit together in the following Interview Covenant:

- After a time of prayer upon receiving the call list, the call committee (generally the chair) will make contact with all of the candidates within 48 hours of receiving the call list in order to set up a date for each interview.

*(Transition Manual, Section 7, page 1)*

- **Scheduling Interviews:** It is best to have unrushed time for each interview, while not being overly lengthy. Please have only one interview in a day, and preferably only up to two interviews in a week. This provides paced time for the Call Committee to really focus and take in all opportunities associated with each candidate's interview, plus time for prayer and discernment related to each interview.

- The call committee will:

1. Treat all the pastoral candidates equally and fairly, regardless of first impressions received from printed materials;
2. Use the same interview format offering the same interviewing/visiting opportunities for all candidates on the call list; and
3. Decide if they will travel in pairs to hear the candidates preach or seek preaching arrangement of closer proximity through the dean or representative.

*(Transition Manual, Section 7, page 1)*

- Upon receiving the call list, the call committee members will reaffirm their commitment to confidentiality. Pastors' name and information are not to be shared with spouses or partners, family, council members or anyone else outside of the call committee. All committee members, particularly the chair and recorder, will be guarded in all their communications within the committee regarding candidate names, locations and other information about them.

*(Transition Manual, Section 7, page 1)*

- Within four to six weeks of receiving the call list, the call committee will have interviewed all candidates on the call list and will either:

1. Identify a pastoral candidate as the primary candidate for the council to interview and release other pastoral candidates from consideration,
2. Or the call committee may discern and decide that there is not a pastoral candidate suitable for their recommendation to the congregational council, release all the candidates and following a review with a representative of the Office of the Bishop, request another call list.

*(Transition Manual, Section 7, page 5 & 6)*

- The congregation affirms its commitment to provide prompt reimbursement for all expenses incurred by the pastoral candidates related to the interview.

*(Transition Manual, Section 7, page 2)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (*legible signature*), Call Committee Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lutheran Church

\_\_\_\_\_  
, Florida

Names of remaining Call Committee members:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (legible signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (legible signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (legible signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (legible signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (legible signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (legible signature)  
Conference Dean or  
Representative of the Office of the Bishop  
Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## *Resource B*

# *Questions a Call Committee May Ask*

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As the call committee decides on questions to ask each pastoral candidate, the committee should be mindful of the leadership needs identified in the Congregational Ministry Site Profile and the time restrictions of the interview. From the long list of possible questions, the committee needs to identify or create 8 to 10 questions that will shape the primary part of the interview and determine who on the committee will ask each question. The following question examples are related to each leadership skill and ministry area; some may be combined into one question. The committee will note that some questions are actually invitations to make comments: The committee must be selective.

### **Worship / Preaching**

1. Share some thoughts about the worship life of a congregation and your leadership of worship.
2. Describe how you prepare for sermons and your style of preaching.

### **Evangelism / Witness**

1. Describe a recent example where you encountered an unchurched person in your community and shared your faith with that person.
2. What kind of guidance and training do you provide members of your congregation for reaching unchurched persons in the community?

### **Stewardship**

1. Describe the development of your personal sense of Christian stewardship.
2. How have you helped members in your congregation grow in their personal stewardship?

### **Teaching the Faith / Interpreter of Theology**

1. Share how you have helped adults evaluate their faith development and grow in their faith.
2. Give examples of how you have shared your understanding of the Bible and Lutheran theology with adults who lack background in the Lutheran faith.

### **Administrator / Leader**

1. How do you empower others in ministry? Describe steps you normally take to recruit, train and encourage lay persons for leadership roles within the church and community.
2. How would you describe your style of leadership as it relates to the work of the congregation?
3. Tell about a period in your ministry when you had to manage multiple demands upon your time and work and how you determined priorities and maintained balance in your life.

### **Social Ministry / Outreach**

1. Share an example of how you have helped persons within a congregation to become aware of community needs and participate in action and advocacy to meet those needs.
2. Describe how you have encouraged and led your congregation in getting to know and become involved within the community.

### **Interpersonal Climate**

1. Give examples of how you help others to feel secure, trusted and open with you.
2. When pressure mounts and conflict arises, describe how you react and deal with those who may have strong feelings different than your own. Provide an example from your ministry.

#### Ministry in Crisis / Counseling

1. How have you established and used boundaries to strengthen your ministry to persons in crisis or in need of counseling?
2. Describe your special gifts and limitations in the area of ministering to persons in crisis.

#### Innovator

1. Describe your approach to introducing new ideas in the congregation.
2. Think back to a situation in your ministry that was stagnate or failing, and describe how you were able to work with others to revitalize it.

#### Denominational Leadership

1. Describe how you have guided your congregation into understanding and appreciation of their relationship to the synod and churchwide expression of the church.
2. What have been your favorite and most meaningful involvements in the work of the church beyond the local congregation?

#### Children and Youth Ministry

1. What is your approach to teaching children and young people about the Christian faith and involving them in the life of the church?
2. Share an event or experience you had of a ministry connection with youth.

#### Your Call to Ministry

1. Briefly describe the events which led you to prepare for the ministry.
2. In what ways has your call to ministry changed over the years? What words would you use to describe your ministry and why?

#### Personal Growth

1. Describe some of your most important accomplishments and how you went about reaching those goals.
2. How do you work at making yourself more effective in your ministry?

#### Family and Recreation

1. Tell us something about your family and how you assure balance between your call to ministry and your personal life.
2. Briefly describe ways in which you care for yourself physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

#### Other Questions

Consider carefully other questions that might be most helpful to the call committee in determining which candidate would make the best pastor for the congregation.

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## *Resource C*

# *Questions Candidates May Ask*

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An effective interview works two ways, with the candidate also bringing questions and concerns to the call committee about the congregation, its mission and vision. The candidate may also have questions related to the Congregational Ministry Site Profile. The following questions are some examples that could be asked of the call committee by a perspective pastoral candidate.

1. What is the mission of your congregation and how are you personally involved in that mission? Does the congregation have a Mission Statement? What is it? What does it mean to you?
2. Describe the worship and music practices of the congregation including the frequency and methods of celebrating holy communion. What are the congregation's expectations for worship? What is the openness to creativity?
3. What is the role of staff and what is the role of the laity in your congregation?
4. How many people are involved in leadership roles? How are lay people involved in worship?
5. In your opinion, how are decisions made in your congregation?
6. What long and short term goals has the congregation adopted? What are the most important goals for the congregation in the next three years?
7. Describe the sense of partnership and involvement of the congregation with the conference, the synod and the churchwide expression of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
8. Does the congregation normally have members attend the Synod Assembly and conference meetings?
9. What is the congregation's commitment to ELCA Mission Support/benevolence?
10. What is the congregation's attitude toward the pastor's participation in community affairs and in the life and ministry of the whole Church?
11. In what ecumenical and inter-church activities has the congregation been engaged?
12. Do members visit the sick and assist with the pastoral care of members and friends?
13. What do you see as the possibility of growth for this congregation and why?
14. Describe the congregation's education and faith development programs.
15. Describe the sense of unity within the congregation.
16. How does the congregation respond to change and how are changes made?
17. Describe the ministries and programs of the congregation.
18. When was the congregation's constitution last updated?
19. How would you describe the congregation's financial situation? Does income meet expenses? What shape does the stewardship program take?
20. Describe the congregation's evangelism program and its outreach and invitation to the unchurched.
21. Describe the youth ministry program and how are the youth involved in the congregation?
22. What part do family members of a pastor have in the congregation?
23. Are there any unresolved conflicts that I should know about in considering a call to this congregation?
24. How does this congregation and leadership address conflict?
24. Why did the previous pastor leave?
25. What is the salary and compensation package that I might expect at this congregation?

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*Resource D*  
***Sample Letter – Release of a Candidate***

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Date

The Rev. (***Full Name of Pastoral Candidate***)

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Pastor (***Last Name***),

On behalf of the Call Committee of (***Name of Congregation***) Lutheran Church, I want to express our sincere appreciation for the opportunity to meet and visit with you on (***day and date***). We thought it was a very helpful and informative interview. It certainly allowed us to gain a clearer perspective regarding your many gifts as a pastor and we thank you for that. We particularly appreciated your comments about.... (*share a highlight or two*).

After careful and prayerful discernment, it is our decision to release you from further consideration as pastor of this congregation. We hope that you will not interpret this decision as a personal reflection on your skills as a pastor. We have made this decision based upon our assessment of the current leadership needs of this congregation and our effort to find the person who best meets these needs. It seemed to us that.... (*share a reason or two why this pastor did not seem to be the best candidate; this is good feedback to candidates*).

If you have questions or concerns about the interview, we would be happy to discuss them with you. You may contact (***person on Call Committee to contact***) at (***phone number***).

Sincerely yours,

***Signature***

Name of Letter Writer

Call Committee

cc -Bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod

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## SECTION 8

# *Meeting and Calling a New Pastor*

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### **The Council Receives the Recommendation**

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When the call committee has decided on a primary candidate, a meeting of the congregation council is scheduled to receive the recommendation. At the start of this meeting, the president of the council will review matters of confidentiality with the whole council. All information about the candidate and the candidate's location are not to be shared beyond the council with spouses/partners, families, or the congregation at large until a decision has been made whether to recommend the candidate to the congregation. All council members, particularly the president and secretary, will be guarded in all their communications within the council regarding the candidate's name, location and other information. Pastor-candidates place a great deal of trust in the ability of council members and call committees to keep confidences so as not to hinder their present ministries if they were not to receive a new call. The Interview Covenant for Congregation Councils (Resource A) is reviewed and signed by all members of the congregation council and then returned to the Office of the Bishop.

The members of the call committee, or perhaps the chair of the call committee and one or two others, meet with the council to share the name and Rostered Minister Profile information about the primary candidate. The call committee provides thorough information about the interview of this candidate and reasons for choosing this candidate as the primary candidate. The names and information about the other candidates remain confidential and are not shared with the council. The council seeks any information from the call committee that will assist them in accepting the recommendation.

It is now the congregation council's responsibility to continue the process of discerning God's will for this congregation and its next pastor. After meeting and interviewing the primary candidate, the council determines whether to recommend the candidate to the congregation for Call as the congregation's new pastor.

### **The Council's Initial Meeting with the Primary Candidate**

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The council schedules a meeting with the primary candidate following similar guidelines described in Section 7 for hosting and interviewing a candidate including the confirmation of all arrangements. The members of council will want to determine in advance some of the questions that they desire to ask the candidate during their time together. The pastor's spouse/partner may also be invited to travel with the candidate to this interview in order to meet the council, see the church facilities and tour the community. Only the candidate, however, is interviewed; the spouse/partner is not interviewed.

On this visit, the candidate may be introduced to members of the staff and possibly some additional congregational leaders. Since the council has not yet voted to recommend this candidate to the congregation for Call as its new pastor, introductions should not be extensive.

It is critical that sometime during this visit by the candidate, the president and perhaps one or two others meet with the candidate privately to discuss and negotiate an acceptable compensation package that would later be approved by the whole council and recommended to the congregation if this candidate is recommended to the congregation for Call.

Fairly soon after the interview, the council will meet to share impressions, pray together and discern whether God is leading them to make a decision to recommend this candidate to the congregation for Call. Each council member might share a response to the question "What is the Spirit telling you

about this candidate?” Share concerns as well as positives. Those involved in the compensation negotiation will share the results of that private conversation with the pastoral candidate. Then, asking for the Spirit’s guidance, the council votes on the question of recommending this candidate to the congregation for Call as its new pastor. The vote requires a simple majority; a full consensus of the council may not be possible. The council also votes to recommend the compensation package to the congregation.

In a timely manner, the council president conveys to the primary candidate the decision of the council by phone and by written communication copied to the bishop. If the decision is positive, this letter might also include details of the arrangements to have the pastor and his/her spouse/partner return for a reception with the congregation sometime prior to the weekend of the Congregational Meeting to vote on extending the Call.

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## When the Council Declines to Recommend

If the vote to recommend the primary candidate to the congregation fails, then the candidate’s name will be released and the call committee asked to request a new call list from the Office of the Bishop. Reasons for the decision are shared with the call committee and the Office of the Bishop to assist all in the preparation of a new call list and new interviews. The council president should send a letter of appreciation to the candidate thanking him/her for participation in the call process and sharing specific reasons why the council chose not to recommend the candidate for Call. A *Sample Letter for Release of a Candidate* is included in the resources at the end of Section 7.

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## Compensation Package

It is the responsibility of the congregation council to negotiate with the candidate a clear and precise understanding of the compensation package. The council should thoroughly review the resource, *Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Leaders*, provided by the Florida-Bahamas Synod and available on the website: fbsynod.com (In the search box, type “compensation guidelines” and click search. Select the guidelines for the current year.) This resource assists the council in its meeting and conversation with the candidate. Following the council’s interview with the candidate, the president of the council, and possibly one other council member, meet with the candidate to negotiate an acceptable compensation package that would later be approved by the whole council and recommended to the congregation.

It is the expectation of the Office of the Bishop that pastoral compensation packages meet or exceed the guidelines. If both parties agree to compensation below minimums, the compensation needs to be reviewed annually, making adjustments to meet minimum guidelines. Raises are to be considered separately from adjustments to meet guidelines.

Also expected is a sabbatical following four to seven years of ministry. (See Compensation Guidelines for more information).

A copy of the document, *Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor*, is included at the end of this section along with the guide, *Steps for Completion of the Compensation Form*. The council will complete this form using the figures agreed upon by the candidate and the council. As soon as possible, a copy of this form should be sent to the Office of the Bishop for review **prior** to the congregational reception to meet the candidate. The bishop reviews the form to assure that it is in good order for presentation for approval at the congregational meeting. The council may contact Portico (formerly Board of Pensions) for assistance in calculating pension and health benefits for the compensation package at (800) 352-2876 or by visiting their web site at [www.porticobenefits.org](http://www.porticobenefits.org).

The Letter of Call and the Definition of Compensation & Benefits documents are a legal and binding contract: “continuing mutual relationship and commitment” between the congregation and the pastor. Modifications to the compensation are done in mutuality, with agreement between both parties.

Read and review “Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor” document in the resources at the end of this section.

## **Congregation Reception to Meet the Candidate**

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It is desirable that the members of the congregation have opportunity to meet the Primary Candidate (and spouse or partner) at an informal reception on a different weekend than the congregational meeting to vote to extend a call. This reception should be carefully coordinated with the candidate who will likely be serving under Call to another congregation at this time. It is usually preferable to plan this reception for an evening in order that the candidate may return to lead worship at his/her present church. The reception provides opportunity for the candidate to socialize with members and perhaps bring greetings to those present. It is not a time for staging additional group questions and answers, nor should this reception be construed as yet another interview.

Sometimes, if the candidate is able to be present for a Sunday morning to be introduced, it is strongly recommended to refrain from having the candidate preach to avoid the sense that the congregation is making its decision based upon one sermon. The call committee has already experienced the preaching and worship leadership of the candidate.

The congregation reception to meet the candidate should never be on the same day as the congregational meeting. It is inappropriate for a candidate to be present when the voting is taking place. Besides being awkward for the candidate, the members of the congregation may feel compelled to vote favorably for a candidate who is awaiting word in a nearby room of the church. The congregation deserves opportunity to reflect upon the time spent with the candidate and to pray about how they experience the Holy Spirit might be guiding them in the discernment process.

## **Sharing Information about the Primary Candidate**

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Because of matters of confidentiality, it is preferred that the council use direct mailing to the congregational members to share information about the reception to meet the candidate, the congregational meeting, and personal information about the candidate. Newsletter mailing lists usually include many, including other pastors and congregations, who are not part of the congregation membership. E-mail is too readily forwarded. The candidate should be asked to provide a brief bio to share with the congregation.

## **Setting Up the Congregational Meeting**

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The special congregational meeting to call a pastor is an important event in the life of a congregation, and the council should attend carefully to the details related to such a meeting. The congregation’s constitution (chapter 10) will provide information about properly calling a special congregational meeting, the necessary notice to voting members, and the quorum of membership required. The council president should coordinate this meeting date with the Office of the Bishop to assure that a representative of the bishop can be present as required by the constitution. (Interim Pastors/Term Call Pastors should not be present at the congregational meeting.)

The council president will want to arrange in advance for someone to provide devotions at the opening of the congregation meeting. If desired, the president may request in advance that the representative of the Office of the Bishop provide this devotional.

The direct mailing to notify members of the date and time of the meeting (and perhaps also the date and time for the reception to meet the candidate) may include a brief statement from the call committee as well as information about the candidate’s experience, special gifts and qualifications.

The only business to be conducted at this special congregational meeting is a vote to extend a Call to the candidate. This one vote will also ratify the compensation package as approved and presented by the congregation council. Details about this meeting follow in this section of the manual.

## Voting Members

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A Voting Member is a confirmed member of this congregation, who during the current or preceding calendar year has communed in this congregation and has made a contribution of record to this congregation (\*C8.02.c. of the congregation's constitution).

Associate members of this congregation do not have voting rights (\*C8.02.d.), but may be granted voice and discussion privileges at the congregational meeting. However, the meeting should not be postponed to await the return of Associate Members from the north.

In preparation for the congregational meeting, the council may desire to print out a listing of all eligible voting members. The secretary or council designee(s) may greet members as they arrive for the meeting and invite qualified voting members to sign in or have their names checked off. This process also assists in establishing that a proper quorum is present (C10.04 of the congregation's constitution provides information about the quorum of membership necessary).

Unless otherwise specified in C10.05 of the congregation's constitution, voting by proxy or by absentee ballot is not permitted. If such voting is permitted, such ballots would be counted toward the necessary quorum.

## The Congregational Meeting

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The resource, *Outline for a Congregational Meeting to Call a Pastor*, may be found in the resources of this section. The president, or chair of the meeting if other than the president, will want to establish before the start of the meeting that the required quorum is present.

The meeting is called to order, the purpose of the meeting is announced, the presence of a quorum to do business is affirmed, and the chair calls upon the one asked to prepare devotions. If the representative of the Office of the Bishop has been asked to lead the devotions, the president will first introduce this person. If the representative of the Office of the Bishop is not doing devotions, he/she is introduced following the devotions. The role of this person is to represent the presence of the bishop, to bring greetings, to certify the vote, and to deliver the official Letter of Call form should the vote be positive.

- **Tellers:** Three persons should be appointed to serve as tellers to distribute, collect and count the ballots. The representative of the Office of the Bishop will serve as an observer to the work of the tellers. As the ballots are counted, they are numbered sequentially in order to preclude errors of double counting or omission of a ballot. All ballots are to be kept for one year from the date of the meeting with notation that they may be destroyed after the anniversary date. Invalid ballots and ballots marked "abstain" are not included in the number of total ballots cast or the calculation of the number of ballots needed for election.
- **Motion for the Call of the Pastor and Discussion:** The secretary of the council is invited to present the motion for the Call of the pastor (including the compensation package as approved and presented on behalf of the council). Information about the proposed candidate should be presented to the congregation. Some members of the call committee or council could be invited to share specific information or their personal positive impressions.

The secretary or council designee is invited to present the compensation package as recommended by the council. The council presents detailed information about the

compensation package indicating that this package has been negotiated with the candidate and reviewed by the bishop.

The congregation is then invited to address the chair with any questions about the proposed candidate and the compensation package. The chair may invite others from the council or call committee to respond to the questions. It is appropriate that members ask why this particular candidate was selected as Primary Candidate; however, it is inappropriate for the call committee to reveal anything specific about the other candidates that were interviewed.

- **The Vote to Call the Pastor:** The vote to Call a pastor will be by written (private) ballot. This one vote will also ratify the compensation package as approved and presented by the congregation council. The ballots should be pre-printed to include the motion to Call the candidate (with full name preceded with the title “The Rev.”) to serve as pastor (or specific position) of the congregation (name).

The ballot invites the voter to check one of two options: Yes or No. A two-thirds majority is required. The ballots are distributed only to the voting members present at the meeting. Voting members are instructed to mark their ballots and then hold them up for collection by the tellers. When all ballots are collected, the voting is declared closed. After the counting of the ballots, the head teller reports the result of the voting to the chair who announces the result to the congregation.

- **If the Motion to Call the Pastor is Carried:** If the vote to Call the pastor receives the necessary two-thirds majority, the chair announces that the congregation has called this candidate to serve as their pastor.

NOTE: A motion to “make the vote unanimous” requires another written (private) ballot and the result must be a unanimous vote. It is preferred to avoid such a vote since those who originally voted “no” will feel pressured to vote differently and the pastor is deprived of the actual vote, which is often helpful information.

- **If the Motion to Call Fails:** If the motion to Call the pastor fails to receive the necessary two-thirds majority of valid votes cast, the chair announces that the congregation has voted *not* to Call this candidate as its next pastor.

The congregation is informed that the council will meet with a representative of the Office of the Bishop to discuss the continuation of the call process. Usually the same call committee is asked to reconvene to work with a new call list.

The congregational meeting moves to adjournment.

## **The Letter of Call**

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The representative of the Office of the Bishop will normally bring a ***Letter of Call*** form (sample in resources at end of this section) to the congregational meeting. Immediately following the meeting, the officers of the council (president and secretary) will sign the Letter of Call and the ***Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor*** (see sample in resources at end of this section), which will reflect the compensation package approved by the congregation.

This call letter is then forwarded to the bishop for signature along with a copy of the ***Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor***. The bishop will send the signed documents to the pastor who has up to four weeks to respond.



## **Notifying the Pastor of the Congregation's Decision**

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The council president phones the candidate immediately following the congregational meeting and informs him/her of the results of the vote, sharing with the pastor the actual voting totals. If the motion to Call received the necessary two-thirds majority, the president informs the pastor that the Letter of Call is being signed and will be sent to the bishop for signature and forwarding to the pastor. The president may then indicate the congregation's excitement and anticipation, as well as assuring the pastor that the congregation will remember him/her in their prayers as the pastor decides about accepting the Call.

If the motion to Call the pastor did not receive the necessary two-thirds majority vote, the president expresses the council's regrets, shares any information that might explain why the congregation chose not to extend the Call, and expresses the congregation's best wishes for the pastor's continued ministry in other settings.

The president also shares with the pastor that a letter of notification will also be following in the mail. Copies of two sample letters, Letter Informing Pastor of Call and Letter Informing Pastor that a Call Was Not Extended are included as resources at the end of this section.

## **The Pastor's Response to the Call**

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As soon as the council receives the pastor's letter of acceptance or learns of the pastor's declining the Call, the council sends an announcement to the members of the congregation. A copy of the pastor's letter of acceptance could be included with the announcement. In accepting, the pastor should indicate the desired starting date, usually within one to two months. Any variance needs to be negotiated between the council and the pastor. A copy of the pastor's letter of acceptance or decline of the Call should be conveyed promptly to the Office of the Bishop.

## **When a Call is not Extended or Accepted**

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When the motion to Call a candidate does not receive the necessary two-thirds vote, or when the pastor declines to accept the Call, the council will meet again with a representative of the Office of the Bishop to discuss the continuation of the call process.

If the Call was not extended, this meeting will include a discussion of reasons why the congregation chose not to call the recommended candidate.

If the Pastor chose not to accept the Call after receiving it, the council and the representative of the Office of the Bishop will discuss any information available that might indicate why the pastor chose to decline the Call.

The council and the representative of the Office of the Bishop may discuss whether there are matters that need to be addressed prior to continuing the call process. Any decisions that are made are shared with the congregation.

Usually the same members who have served on the call committee are asked to reconvene their work. There may be some committee changes should any of the call committee's members express a desire not to continue such service, or should the council have reason to request some changes. This is also an opportunity to change chairs, if that is desired.



## Reviewing the Process: The Spirit's Leading

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When a Call is not extended or when a Call is not accepted by the pastor, it is important to remember what the call process is about. It is about discerning God's will for this congregation and who will be called to serve as its pastor.

The call process is filled from beginning to end with opportunities for the Spirit to lead and to inform those who are participating in the process. The Spirit works with the council, the call committee, the Office of the Bishop, the congregation and those who become pastoral candidates. All involved must be aware of the holy work that they are doing and the awesome privilege and responsibility of seeking to discern God's will.

Even in disappointment or negative decisions, God is present and steadfast in love. The people of God are assured that God will continue to work to prosper the mission and ministry of each congregation.

*The Spirit leads. It is for God's people to follow.*

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## *Resource A*

# *Interview Covenant: Congregation Council*

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The congregation council of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church in \_\_\_\_\_ and the Florida-Bahamas Synod through Office of the Bishop commit together in the following Interview Covenant:

- After a time of prayer upon receiving the name of the primary candidate, the council (generally the president) will make contact with the candidate within 48 hours in order to set up a date for the interview.

*(Transition Manual, Section 8, page 1)*

- Planning for the Interview: It is best to have unrushed time for the interview, while not being overly lengthy. Members of council will want to determine in advance some of the questions that they desire to ask the candidate. Be sure to provide time for the council to have prayer and discernment following the interview.

*(Transition Manual, Section 8, page 1)*

- During the visit of the primary candidate:
  1. The candidate will be received by the council with openness to discerning God's will for this congregation and its next pastor within the interview and in the time before and after.
  2. The candidate may be introduced to a limited number of staff members or perhaps other congregational leaders, as seems appropriate, while keeping in mind that this is still a confidential part of the process prior to the decision for recommending a candidate to the congregation.
  3. The candidate's spouse/partner will meet the council outside of the formal interview, if the opportunity occurs.
  4. The president and perhaps one or two others will meet with the candidate privately to discuss and negotiate an acceptable compensation package that would later be approved by the whole council and recommended to the congregation if this candidate is recommended to the congregation for Call.

*(Transition Manual, Section 8, page 1)*

- Upon receiving the name of the primary candidate, members of the council will reaffirm their commitment to confidentiality. The pastor's name and information will not be shared with spouses or partners, family, or anyone outside of the council or call committee. All council members, particularly the president and secretary, will be guarded in all their communications within the council regarding the candidate's name, location and other information.

*(Transition Manual, Section 8, page 1)*

- Following the interview and the council decision on recommendation for Call, the president

will in a timely manner convey that decision to the candidate by phone and in writing and copied to the Office of the Bishop.

*(Transition Manual, Section 8, page 2)*

- The congregation affirms its commitment to provide prompt reimbursement for all expenses incurred by the pastoral candidate related to the interview.

*(Transition Manual, Section 7, page 2)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (*legible signature*), Council President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church

\_\_\_\_\_, Florida

Names & legible signatures of  
Congregation Council members:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

\_\_\_\_\_  
Conference Dean or  
Representative of the Office of the Bishop  
Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA



## Definition of Compensation, Benefits and Responsibilities For Deacon Under Call

Prepared by

Name

Congregation

For

For the Period

to

### A. COMPENSATION

The congregation will provide the following annual compensation:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

### B. PENSION AND OTHER BENEFITS

The congregation will sponsor the deacon in the Pension and Other Benefits Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which provides retirement, disability, survivor, and medical-dental coverage. (*Sponsorship will include medical-dental coverage for the individual's spouse and children unless they have other employer-provided group medical insurance coverage and the individual consents to waiving medical-dental coverage for them under the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program.*)

1. ELCA Pension at \_\_\_\_\_ % of defined compensation

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

2. ELCA Medical and Dental Insurance (*check one below*):

☐ Member only

☐ Member and Children

☐ Coverage Waived

☐ Member and spouse

☐ Member, spouse & children

3. Other Insurance or benefits:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

### C. EXPENSES

The congregation will provide for the following expenses related to this ministry:

a. Automobile and travel allowance

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

b. Other professional expenses

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

c. Expenses for official meetings of the synod, as reimbursed

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

d. Continuing education (\$1000 recommended; minimum \$700 from calling source)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

f. Pay the moving expenses to this field of service as follows \_\_\_\_\_

### D. AGREEMENT

1. Vacation time of \_\_\_\_\_ days per year, including \_\_\_\_\_ Sundays

2. Paid sabbatical leave of \_\_\_\_\_ months after each four years of service in the same ministry setting.

3. Continuing education time of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks per year (*recommended minimum of two weeks per year that may be accumulated up to three years, as reflected in a continuing-education agreement developed by the deacon and congregation council*)

4. Participation in a First-Call Theological Education Program, where applicable

5. Ongoing care through a Mutual Ministry Committee

6. Up to two months of continued salary and contributions to the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program in a 12-month period in the event that the pastor is physically or mentally disabled

7. Maternity/Paternity or Adoptive leave of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks with full salary, housing and benefits (Recommended 6 weeks; 4 weeks minimum)

## E. OTHER PROVISIONS

Special emphases of the deacon and special encouragement by the congregation:

1. During this time period, the deacon will give special attention to the following:

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2. The congregation will encourage and support this deacon's ministry in the following ways:

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## F. OTHER MATTERS

Such as accountabilities, service on synodical or churchwide boards and committees, work in church camp programs, or other such details.

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## G. COTERMINOUS CALL

Calls of deacons are coterminous with the ending of the call of the senior/lead pastor. See attached document on Team Ministry calls for additional details.

I certify that the necessary approvals of the congregation and congregational counsel have been granted for the provisions set forth above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Congregation President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I certify that I accept the above statement:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deacon

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Definition of Compensation, Benefits, And Responsibilities for Pastoral Service

Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_

For The Reverend \_\_\_\_\_

For the Period \_\_\_\_\_

### A. COMPENSATION

The congregation will provide the following annual compensation:

1. Base Cash Salary \$ \_\_\_\_\_
2. Housing Allowance (*if provided*) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
3. Self-employed Social Security payment allowance (*if provided*) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
4. If a parsonage or other housing is provided:
  - a. Utilities allowance \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Furnishings allowance \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Housing equity allowance \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### B. PENSION AND OTHER BENEFITS

The congregation will sponsor the pastor in the Pension and Other Benefits Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which provides retirement, disability, survivor, and medical-dental coverage. (*Sponsorship will include medical-dental coverage for the individual's spouse and children unless they have other employer-provided group medical insurance coverage and the individual consents to waiving medical-dental coverage for them under the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program.*)

1. ELCA Pension 12% of defined compensation
2. ELCA Medical and Dental Insurance (*check one below*):  
☐ Member only      ☐ Member and Children      ☐ Coverage Waived  
☐ Member and spouse      ☐ Member, spouse & children
3. Other Insurance or benefits: \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### C. EXPENSES

The congregation will provide for the following expenses related to this pastor's ministry:

- a. Automobile and travel allowance \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Other professional expenses \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Expenses for official meetings of the synod, as reimbursed \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Continuing education (\$1000 recommended; minimum \$700 from calling source) \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Pay the moving expenses to this field of service as follows \_\_\_\_\_

### D. AGREEMENT

1. Vacation time of \_\_\_\_\_ days per year, including \_\_\_\_\_ Sundays
2. Paid sabbatical leave of \_\_\_\_\_ months after each four years of service in the same ministry setting.
3. Continuing education time of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks per year (*recommended minimum of two weeks per year that may be accumulated up to three years, as reflected in a continuing-education agreement developed by the rostered person and congregation council*)
4. Participation in a First-Call Theological Education Program, where applicable.
5. Ongoing care through a Mutual Ministry Committee.
6. Up to two months of continued salary and contributions to the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program in a 12-month period in the event that the pastor is physically or mentally disabled.
7. Maternity/Paternity or Adoptive leave of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks with full salary, housing and benefits (Recommended 6 weeks; 4 weeks minimum).

## E. OTHER PROVISIONS

Special emphases of the pastor and special encouragement by the congregation:

1. During this time, the pastor will give special attention to the following:

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2. The congregation will encourage and support this pastor's ministry in the following ways:

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## F. OTHER MATTERS

Such as accountabilities, service on synodical or churchwide boards and committees, work in church camp programs, or other such details.

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## G. POST CALL RETREAT WITH NEW PASTOR

The Congregation Council in consultation with the new senior pastor will schedule a two-day retreat (evening Day 1, morning to afternoon Day 2) within three months of the arrival of the senior pastor. This retreat should be led by an outside resource person. At least 20% of the congregation should attend the retreat for it to be successful throughout the congregation. Please contact the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership for resources.

## H. COTERMINOUS CALLS

Calls of staff pastors are coterminous with the ending of the call of the senior/lead pastor and staff pastors will not be available for lead pastor call. See attached document on Team Ministry Calls for additional details.

## I. FIRST CALL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The FCTE ministry site is asked to: (a) Provide time for the first call leader to participate in all components of the FCTE program; (b) Budget for and provide at least \$500 annually to fund the events the leader will attend; (c) Participate in a Formative Review with the leader and representatives from the synod office 6-12 months into the leader's new call.

We, the undersigned, certify that the necessary approvals of the congregation and congregational council have been granted for the provisions set forth above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Congregation President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Council Secretary

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

I certify that I accept the above statement:

The Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ Date of signature: \_\_\_\_\_



## STEPS TO COMPLETE:

### *Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor*



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

FIRST LINE: Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_ (Name and address of congregation)

SECOND LINE: for the Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of pastor)

THIRD LINE: for the period: (Duration—normally for one year, with annual review)

#### **A. COMPENSATION**

LINE A.1.: List the base cash salary.

LINE A.2.: List the dollar amount of housing allowance beyond base salary. Designation of the percentage and amount of salary devoted to housing allowance must be done in an annual resolution of the congregation council's minutes. The individual pastor is finally responsible for any tax implications of the housing allowance.

Compensation does not include every expense or benefit connected with a particular ministry.

LINE A.3.: List dollar amount of any payment allowance (if provided) for "Self-employed Social Security."

LINE A.4.: If a parsonage or other housing is provided, consider costs of a utilities allowance (if provided) or other allowances (if any).

#### **B. PENSION AND OTHER BENEFITS**

The Pension and Other Benefits Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was established to provide the pastor with retirement, disability, survivor, and medical-dental coverage.

LINE B.1.: Indicate the percentage of contribution on the basis of the defined compensation of the pastor (salary and housing). The percentage is based on current requirements of the plan and the policy of the synod for Letters of Call.

LINE B.2.: Sponsorship will include medical-dental coverage (where applicable) for the pastor's spouse and children unless they have other employer-provided group medical insurance and the pastor consents to waiving medical-dental coverage under the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program.

LINE B.3.: List amounts of other insurance or benefits, if any, to be provided to the pastor, beyond those that are part of the pension and benefits contributions made by the congregation for the types of coverage provided under the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program (retirement, disability, survivor, and medical-dental coverage).

## **C. EXPENSES**

Expenses are NOT part of the pastor's compensation. Rather, these items represent payment of costs related to the carrying out of this ministry.

- LINE C.1.: Automobile expenses may be covered by a specified total annual amount or on an actual recorded mileage basis.
- Other travel allowance provisions would be noted here as well.
- LINE C.2.: Indicate amount (if any) to be provided for other professional expenses, such as an allowance for theological books and periodicals.
- LINE C.3.: Coverage of expenses for official meetings of the synod is required.
- LINE C.4.: Indicate amount provided for continuing education.
- LINE C.5.: List other items and amounts to be provided for them.
- LINE C.6.: For pastor accepting a call, define arrangements and reimbursements for moving expenses. Moving expenses normally are paid in full by the calling congregation.

## **D. AGREEMENT**

- LINE D.1.: Enter vacation time. Normally four weeks per year encompassing four Sundays is provided.
- LINE D.2.: Enter time for continuing education. Minimum recommendation is indicated on the form.
- LINE D.3.: Provision must be made for the "First-Call Theological Education Program" for recent seminary graduates.
- LINE D.4.: This provides a reminder of the congregation's commitment to the care exercised by a Mutual Ministry Committee (C13.04. in the *Model Constitution for Congregations*).
- LINE D.5.: Disability leave provisions are coordinated with the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program and with Social Security.
- a. Up to two months of continued salary, housing, and contributions to the pension program in a 12-month period are to be provided by the congregation.
  - b. Provision may be made for further unpaid time for disability recovery as agreed by the congregation, but with the stipulation that unused accumulated sick leave will not be compensated at the end of the call.
- LINE D.6.: Where applicable, maternity/paternity or adoptive leave is noted.

**E. OTHER PROVISIONS**

A description of the particular responsibilities of the position may be attached or a list may be included here indicating the areas to which the pastor will give special attention and the ways in which the congregation will offer encouragement.

**F. OTHER MATTERS**

Additional detail may be inserted here related to the broader responsibilities that a pastor may carry in the life of the church.

**SIGNATURES**

Normally, the president or vice president of the congregation signs and dates the document.

When accepting the agreement, the pastor signs and dates the document.

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## *Resource C*

# *Notes in Preparation for a Congregation Meeting to Call a Pastor*

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The congregation meeting to call a pastor is an extremely important event in the life of a congregation. In order to make it run as smoothly as possible and avoid any technical problems, the following notes will benefit the congregation council and the meeting chair.

1. The meeting must be properly called. Check your congregation's constitution C10.03. to determine what kind of notice is necessary. Make sure that the meeting announcement states that only one vote will be taken to call Pr. \_\_\_\_\_. (This one vote will also ratify the compensation package as approved and presented by the congregation council.) Remember that in a special meeting of the congregation, the only business that may be transacted is that which is specified in the meeting announcement (C10.02).
2. Check your constitution chapter C10.04. to determine what constitutes a quorum. The secretary of the congregation shall be present with a list of voting members. Associate members **do not** have voting rights (C8.02.d), but may be granted voice at this meeting.
3. Check chapter C9.01. to determine the percentage of those present and voting necessary to issue the call.
4. Remember that synod guidelines require a representative of the Office of the Bishop to be present at all call meetings. Be sure to contact your Dean or Deployed Assistant to the Bishop well in advance so that a representative may be appointed.
5. Voting at this meeting must be by written ballot. Prepare ballots for the motion to call Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ as Pastor (Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, etc.) of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church with a Defined Compensation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ plus benefits. Make a place for two voting options: yes and no. (The motion has already been made by the council. The congregation is voting on the motion.)
6. You will need three tellers to distribute, collect and count the ballots. Normally the ballots are counted in the room where the meeting is taking place, in view of the congregation. As ballots are counted, they are numbered sequentially in order to preclude errors of double counting. Invalid ballots and ballots marked "abstain" are not included in the calculation of percentages. All ballots are to be kept for one year from the date of the meeting. Three observers will be named to monitor the tellers. Normally one of the observers will be the synod representative.
7. Remember that a motion to instruct the secretary to cast a unanimous ballot must allow the voters to vote by written ballot. It is usually best to avoid the call for a unanimous vote. Those who voted "no" may feel disenfranchised. The pastor being called is also deprived of very important information.

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## *Outline for Congregation Meeting to Call a Pastor*

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- 1) Call the meeting to order.
- 2) Announce that the only business to be conducted at this meeting is one vote to call Rev. \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3) Announce that our constitution in C10.04 requires \_\_\_\_\_ members present to constitute a quorum. Have the Secretary announce the number of voting members present. Declare the quorum if it is indeed present.
- 4) Introduce the representative of the Office of the Bishop. Invite the representative to make a brief statement and open the meeting with prayer.
- 5) Invite the Secretary of the Congregation Council to present the motion for the call of the pastor. The motion does not need a second since it comes from the Congregation Council. It is on the floor for discussion.
- 6) Following discussion, remind the voters that the vote will be taken by written ballot and requires a two-thirds majority to issue the call.
  - \* Instruct the tellers to distribute the pre-printed ballots.
  - \* Only voting members shall receive ballots.
  - \* Members must be present to vote. No absentee votes will be accepted.
  - \* Instruct voters to mark their ballots and pass them to the tellers. When everyone has passed their ballots to the tellers, declare the voting closed and instruct the tellers to count the ballots and report the results to the chair.
- 7) Announce the vote tally and declare the results of the voting.
- 8) If the necessary two thirds majority has been achieved, remind the congregation that the Congregation Council will now proceed to sign the Call Documents and forward them to the Bishop who will sign them and pass them on to the Pastor. The Pastor has thirty days to respond.
- 9) If the two-thirds majority is not achieved, announce that the call has not been issued. Assure the congregation that the Dean or the Assistant to the Bishop will be meeting with the reconvened Call Committee to plan its continued process. Adjourn the meeting with prayer.
- 10) All business now being completed, adjourn the meeting with prayer.

Resource D

## Sample Letter of Call



# LETTER OF CALL

TO AN ORDAINED MINISTER OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

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

(Name)

With prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to do God's will,

(Congregation, Location)

a congregation of the

(Synod Name)

of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

meeting on

(Date)

extends to you this call to serve as

(Position)

We call you to exercise among us the ministry of Word and Sacrament which God has established and which the Holy Spirit empowers: To preach and teach the Word of God in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; to administer Holy Baptism and Holy Communion; to lead us in worship; to proclaim the forgiveness of sins; to provide pastoral care; to speak for justice in behalf of the poor and oppressed; to encourage persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel; to impart knowledge of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its wider ministry; to endeavor to increase support given by our congregation to the work of our whole church; to equip us for witness and service; and guide us in proclaiming God's love through word and deed.

In accepting this call, you hereby promise to fulfill this pastoral ministry in accord with the standards and policies for ordained ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Therefore, be diligent in the study of Holy Scripture, in use of the means of grace, in prayer, in faithful service, and in holy living.

With this call, we pledge our prayers, love, esteem, and personal support for the sake of the ministry entrusted to you by God and for our ministry together in Christ's name. Specific responsibilities, compensation, benefits, and conditions of this call are contained in a document related to this call.

In testimony of this call, we have subscribed our names on behalf of the congregation on this (Date) day of (Month), A.D. (Year)

\_\_\_\_\_  
President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

Attested by \_\_\_\_\_

Bishop of the \_\_\_\_\_

Date of bishop's signing \_\_\_\_\_

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Resource E

## *Sample Letter Informing Pastor of Call*

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Date

The Reverend Jane Pastor  
Address  
City, State, Zip

Dear Pastor \_\_\_\_\_,

*“The gifts God gave are that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.” (Eph. 4:11-13)*

Having sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit and believing that God has called us to share in a continuing mutual relationship and commitment, the people of (Name of Congregation) of (City, State) voted on (date of vote), at a regularly called Congregation Meeting, to call you to become our pastor and teacher, effective (starting date).

With this call, we pledge our prayers, love, esteem and personal support for the sake of the ministry entrusted to you by God and for our ministry together in Christ’s name. Specific responsibilities, compensation, benefits and conditions of this call are described in the Letter of Call and compensation document.

May God grant the Holy Spirit to guide you in the consideration of this call. We eagerly await your prayerful decision.

We are hopeful for a significant and fruitful ministry together in Christ’s name.

Sincerely,

Name of Letter Writer  
President, Congregation Council  
Name of Church

cc – Bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod

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*Resource F*

## *Sample Letter Informing Pastor Call Is Not Extended*

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Pastor \_\_\_\_\_

At the congregation's meeting on (date), the congregation council presented your name to the congregation for call as pastor. Unfortunately, following discussion, the vote did not result in attaining the required positive numbers needed for approval. The vote was (vote results).

Reflected in the congregation's vote was/were the following topic(s) that we share with you in hopes that it can be helpful to you as you continue your search for God's call. (Constructively insert reason(s) for the congregation's vote to decline the call.)

Thank you for engaging thoroughly with us in the interview process. We will continue to pray for you in your search and hope that you will continue to pray for us in our search.

Blessings,

Letter writer name  
Council President  
Congregation's name

cc – Bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod

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## *Resource G*

# *Pastor's Salary and Benefits and Balancing Congregational Budgets*

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In legal terms, when a congregation issues a call and a pastor accepts, they have a contract. In ELCA terms, when a congregation issues a call and a pastor accepts, they have a "continuing mutual relationship and commitment." [See, C9.05]

Looked at either way, the terms of the call can be modified only by agreement between the pastor and the congregation. The congregation cannot unilaterally amend the call (e.g. by reducing the agreed compensation, benefits) any more than the pastor could unilaterally amend the call (e.g. by taking two months' vacation instead of four weeks).

Now ordinarily, the terms of the call do get modified when the congregation adopts a new budget because the pastor agrees to the new compensation package in the budget (which is typically an increase). But when the pastor does not agree because compensation is proposed to decrease, then the compensation amount is not amended, and the pastor is entitled to continue receiving compensation at the prior year's level. In other words, a congregation cannot balance its budget by decreasing the salary and/or benefits of the pastor without the pastor's agreement.

Together the congregation and pastor are faced with difficult questions regarding stewardship and the financial funding of the congregation's mission and ministry. The congregational leadership should give consideration to all potential directions and possibly seek the input of appropriate outside financial and stewardship consultants.

If the congregation still feels that it truly cannot afford to continue the pastor's compensation at the previously agreed level (and the pastor still does not agree to a reduction and refuses to resign the call), then the congregation may initiate a process for the Bishop to investigate and make a recommendation.

The provisions of the constitution [C9,05] require the appropriate meetings and votes, intervention of the Office of the Bishop with a bishop's committee to make recommendations, and then a decision by the congregation and pastor to agree to these recommendations. If both the pastor and congregation still do not agree to the Bishop's recommendations, the congregation may proceed toward ending the call to the pastor as defined in the constitution.

If all parties agree to the bishop's recommendations, which may include a recommendation that the present call situation and agreement be terminated, the recommendations become the agreed upon direction for the congregation and pastor. Appropriate decisions may then be made about proceeding with a new call (to that pastor or another pastor) offering a new level of salary and benefits that the pastor being called would need to agree to before accepting the call to the congregation.

### **Sources:**

Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA  
Model Constitution for Congregations  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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## SECTION 9

# *Welcoming the Congregation's New Pastor*

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### **Preparation for Welcoming the Pastor**

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The word that the pastor has accepted the congregation's Call to serve as its new pastor is exciting news and needs to be shared immediately with all members. The date that the Pastor will lead the first service of worship at the church should be included. Often a social time or reception in honor of the new pastor and his/her family is scheduled after each service of worship providing informal time for some introductions. If it is not a year-round practice, the use of name tags for the first couple of months that a pastor serves the congregation is immensely helpful.

The council president will want to maintain close contact with the new pastor in the days leading to his/her arrival to begin ministry. There will be many questions and concerns to be discussed. In addition to phone contact information, it is most helpful to establish email communications as well.

A member of the Worship Committee or the church secretary should work closely with the new pastor in the planning of the first worship services. This can often be done through email notes and attachments. Worship assistants should be recruited who will assist the pastor in understanding the local worship practices of the congregation, including the manner in which Holy Communion is administered and received at worship. The bulletin should include a gracious welcome of the new pastor and members of his/her family with personal information about the pastor. If the date and time of the Installation Service has been determined, this should be included in this first bulletin and all bulletins leading up to the date of the installation.

### **The Pastor's Move to a New Home**

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The Pastor and his/her spouse or partner will likely need to make several trips for the purpose of house hunting or to determine where they or the family will live until a permanent home is found. The name of a good realtor, perhaps a member of the congregation, might be helpful. The council will want to do everything possible to facilitate this process, including covering such travel expenses and arranging lodging as may be required. The congregation will pay for all moving expenses, including the expense of driving multiple cars to the new area. Usually all such expense reimbursements do not need to be reported on W-2 forms, but both the congregation and the pastor should check with current tax laws and information.

### **A Farewell for the Interim Pastor**

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It is appropriate to celebrate and recognize the ministry of the interim pastor who has served the congregation during the transition period. The celebration should be scheduled for the Interim Pastor's last Sunday, which will be the Sunday prior to the arrival of the newly called pastor. At the end of

Section 9 of this manual, the *Order of Farewell for the Interim Pastor* can be found. A simple reception following each worship service helps to make the day special.

## **Scheduling and Planning the Installation Service**

---

The scheduling of the Installation Service needs to be coordinated with the pastor, the congregation and the Office of the Bishop. The service is usually scheduled at a time that makes it possible for rostered leaders and laity from nearby churches to join in the celebration, most often late afternoon on a Sunday. A representative of the Office of the Bishop, usually the dean of the conference, will be the installer. Members of the congregation, community and conference leaders, and a representative of the Office of the Bishop may be invited to participate in the service. It is appropriate to recognize and show appreciation to the members of the Call Committee and the council as part of the Installation Service.

If the person called to be the new pastor is a recent graduate of seminary (“First Call”), an Ordination Service also needs to be planned. The Ordination Service is planned by the recent graduate in consultation with the bishop who officiates at an ordination. The Ordination Service is often held at a location other than the church to which the person has been called, possibly the ordinand’s “home congregation.” Participants in this service may include persons special to the ordinand’s faith and life development. In such a case, the Installation Service is scheduled at the congregation that has called the ordinand sometime soon after the Ordination Service. However, if the ordinand chooses to have the Ordination Service at the congregation that has called him/her as their new pastor, the Ordination Service and the Installation Service are combined into one service.

A copy of the Service of Installation for a pastor may be obtained from the synod office and is printed in the Occasional Services book, a copy of which most rostered leaders have in their personal libraries.

[Offering: it is appropriate for the offering at the ordination or the installation to model good stewardship practices and generosity. Suggestions for consideration include giving beyond the congregation to a particular ministry passion of the pastor or congregation, and/or to the synod mission fund.]

## **The Reception**

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As part of the festive celebration of the new pastor’s installation, a reception is usually held following the Installation Service. The council could appoint a task force to plan and set up for the reception. It is appropriate to again introduce the pastor’s family and invite the pastor to say a few words of greeting to those gathered at the reception.

## **Invitations**

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As soon as the date and time of the Installation Service is known, work should begin on preparing and designing invitations that may be printed professionally or within the congregation. A sample Invitation to an Installation Service is included at the end of this section. A task force working with the new pastor should develop a list with mailing addresses of those to receive printed invitations.

It is nice to include the members of the congregation on the invitation mailing list even though they will know of the Installation Service through many other means. Invitations could also be sent to the



extended family and friends of the pastor, the interim pastor and former pastors and their families, to the congregation councils of surrounding Lutheran congregations addressed to the president, to all rostered leaders within the conference, to the clergy of denominational churches within the community, to community leaders, to members of the Synod Council and the Office of the Bishop, and to any others desired by the pastor and task force.

## **Communications and Press Releases**

---

The Calling and Installation of a new pastor is a wonderful time to provide local media with press releases and appropriate pictures. An early release could share the news of the congregation's Call of a new pastor, providing detailed information about the pastor's background, schooling, other churches served and family information. A second press release could share information about the Installation Service, including information about the new pastor, the congregation, and the participants in the service. Depending upon lead time and awareness of media practices, these releases could be combined into one article.

The religious editor of the local newspaper may wish to conduct an interview and include pictures taken by their own photographer. This might take the form of a feature story even after the Installation Service. Other forms of communication within the congregation and community should also be explored.

The bishop also sends out a communication to rostered leaders of the synod living in the area of the congregation inviting them to share in the celebration of a colleague's Installation Service. Notice of the installation is also posted in synod communications to all congregations and rostered leaders of the synod.

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*Resource A*  
***Sample Invitation to the Installation Service***

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We request your prayers and presence  
with us for a service of Holy Communion and  
The Order of Installation.

By the Grace of God,

The Rev. Jane A. Pastor

will be installed to the  
Office of Pastor of St. John Lutheran Church.

The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
September 12, 2010  
at 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon.

St. John Lutheran Church  
1234 Main Street  
City, State

Reception immediately following In the Fellowship Hall.

Clergy and Rostered Leaders are invited to vest; color of the day.

Please RSVP by Sunday, August 29, 2010.

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*Resource B*

## *Order of Farewell for the Interim Pastor*

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*At the last service in which an Interim Pastor leads worship, the following may be used before the Benediction. The following may be spoken by the President of the Congregation Council or an Assisting Minister.*

A: People of God, the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ has completed his/her work among us as our Interim Pastor and a new Pastor/Interim Pastor will arrive soon. We thank Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ for being our shepherd and guide for our ministry during the past \_\_\_\_\_ weeks/months/years and wish him/her every blessing for his/her continued ministry in the Church of Jesus Christ.

*A review of the highlights of the interim ministry may be shared at this time.*

A: Let us together give God thanks for Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ and for the work that we have done together in Christ's name.

A: Loving God, we thank you for the blessings of your presence during our time of transition, especially as made known to us through the gifts and ministry of Pastor \_\_\_\_\_. Through him/her we have received your Word for our lives and celebrated the Sacraments, made plans for our ministry and preparations to receive a new shepherd in our midst. Continue to guide us through the completion of our transition process until all things are brought to fulfillment according to your will. Guide as well Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ that he/she may know the comfort of your love and be a blessing to others as he/she has been a blessing to us. All these things we ask in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

C: **Amen.**

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

*The service concludes with the Benediction by the Interim Pastor.*

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## SECTION 10

### *The Early Ministry*

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#### **Transition Team for the New Pastor**

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After the arrival of a new pastor, there will be a significant time of adjustment. The new pastor brings new ideas and different ways of doing ministry. The congregation itself has undergone an in-depth self-study and developed a Congregational Ministry Site Profile. During the interview process and early conversations, many ideas and visions were shared among members and with the new pastor. As the new pastor begins his/her ministry with the congregation, it is helpful to create a Transition Team that will work closely with the pastor and the congregation to shape and support the development of this new ministry.

It is often wise to include several members from the call committee on this team since they were most intimately involved with developing the profile, articulating the congregation's mission and vision, and conducting the first conversations with the new pastor.

The purpose of the Transition Team would be to affirm and strengthen the mission of the congregation and the ministry that the new pastor, the council and the members of the congregation will now undertake together. An important concern of this team will be open communication about expectations and interpreting new visions and directions. This team might serve for six to twelve months and could evolve into a Staff Support Committee (or Mutual Ministry Committee) if one does not already exist within the congregation.

#### **Post Call Retreat**

---

Every new call will include the written expectation that an overnight "Healthy Congregations" retreat (night may be spent at home) with the new pastor and congregation be scheduled within three months of the start of a ministry. At least 20% of the congregation should attend retreat for it to be successful throughout the congregation.

The main purpose of such a retreat is to develop healthy relationships in order to promote a healthy congregation. The scheduling of the retreat should be done soon after the arrival of the new pastor to reserve a retreat facility and to secure a retreat facilitator. An outside leader will facilitate this retreat. Please contact the Specialist for Resources and Training of the Florida-Bahamas Synod or the Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership for the names and contact information of trained retreat facilitators. The retreat design could include: team building activities; spiritual enrichment; roles and expectations clarification; vision, planning and strategy development; or other important leadership emphasis and can be tailored to the needs and desires of the congregation.

This may also be a good setting in which to continue to think about the short and long term future of the congregation. Visioning and goal setting are important to the success of a good ministry and should be a constant feature of the work of the new pastor and council leadership together.

When the design and date of the retreat is set, good publicity and personal invitations will ensure the greatest level of participation by congregational leaders.”

## Reflecting on the Transition Process

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Every congregation experiences the transition process in unique and different ways. An important step to make this process the best that it can be is for those who have completed the process to provide feedback to the Office of the Bishop. A copy of the form, ***Reflections on the Transition Process***, is included with the resources at the end of this section. This form invites responses to the Office of the Bishop regarding the congregation’s experience of the transition period. By completing this form, members of the Call Committee, and the council, if desired, provide valuable information to assist other congregations in similar transition processes.

The form may be copied and completed by each individual member of the call committee, or the committee may choose to work together to complete only one form. The council or council president may also desire to reflect on the transition process and complete a form. All completed forms should be sent to the bishop.

## A Gathering for New Pastors

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While an ordained minister is called by a congregation to serve as its pastor, the pastor also remains a pastor of the whole church.

The conduct of all ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is governed by the document *Definition and Guidelines for Discipline*, which may be found on the synod website at [fbsynod.com/resources/transitions](http://fbsynod.com/resources/transitions). At the end of this section are resources on expectations of rostered leaders.

At the “New Transitions Gathering,” the new pastor has opportunity to meet with other rostered leaders who have accepted new Calls during the previous year and with the bishop and members of the bishop’s staff. This invaluable time together helps provide orientation and support for new ministry settings and a greater sense of collegiality.



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## *Resource A*

# *Reflections on the Transition Process*

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This form invites helpful feedback on the Transition Process. It may be copied and completed by individual members of the Call Committee and of the Council, or the Call Committee and the Council may each complete one form. Completed forms should be sent to the Bishop's office.

1. Please rate the overall experience of the Transition and Call Process:

Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

2. Please rate the helpfulness of the resource manual ***Walking Together Through The Transition Process***:

Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

3. What was most helpful or useful about the ***Walking Together Through The Transition Resource***?

4. What was least helpful or useful about the manual ***Walking Together Through The Transition Process***?

5. Please rate the experience of working with the representatives of the Office of the Bishop:

Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

6. Please rate the experience of developing the Congregational Ministry Site Profile:

Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

7. Please rate the Interview Process in the call process (Call Committee, only):

Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

8. How did the participation in the transition process and the development of the Congregational Ministry Site Profile affect the congregation's sense of mission and ministry?
9. In what ways did the participation in the transition process bring greater understanding of the congregation's inter-connectedness with the whole Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (synod and churchwide)?
10. What was most helpful in the transition process?
11. What was least helpful in the transition process?
12. Please share any helpful or creative ideas that could strengthen and improve the transition process in the Florida-Bahamas Synod:

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

This form was completed by:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Call Committee as a whole
- \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation Council as a whole
- \_\_\_\_\_ Call Committee members individually
- \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation Council members individually

Name of Person Completing this Reflection Form: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Please return this completed Reflections Form to:**  
**Office of the Bishop**  
**3838 W. Cypress Street**  
**Tampa, FL 33607**

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*Resource B*

## *Expectations of the Bishop's Office for Rostered Ministers of the Florida-Bahamas Synod*

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***The Mission of the Florida-Bahamas Synod is to  
Share Christ, make disciples and  
Do justice in the world.***

In its role in supporting the Mission Statement of the Florida-Bahamas Synod and in its episcopal task of oversight, the Office of the Bishop has developed expectations for all rostered ministers who serve our synod. These expectations supplement constitutional requirements (see Constitution for Congregation, Chapter 9). Their goal is to support and resource the ministries of our congregations and rostered ministers by encouraging all to conduct their ministry in as healthy and well-informed way as possible.

### **Personal, Spiritual, and Devotional Life**

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The Bishop expects that all rostered ministers of this synod will be persons of prayer. A strong devotional life is necessary for ministry.

### **Personal Stewardship of Life**

---

The Office of the Bishop expects that all rostered ministers will be good stewards of their life and health. This includes healthy habits of nutrition, exercise, rest and time management. It means nurturing close relationships with spouse/partner, family and friends. The *Definition and Guidelines for Discipline* from the ELCA governs the expected conduct of rostered ministers. Our Bishop expects careful adherence to that model.

### **Good Personal Financial Stewardship**

---

All rostered ministers of this synod are expected to be good stewards of their own financial resources. Growing stewardship will result in joyful generosity to the work of God's kingdom, moving towards a tithe and beyond. The financial stewardship of our rostered ministers serves as a role model for congregation members seeking to grow in their own discipleship.

## **Call Process**

---

The Office of the Bishop expects that all rostered ministers will follow the call process established by this Synod. Rostered ministers will neither initiate nor participate in negotiations with congregations for a new call outside the synodical process. If irregularly contacted, the rostered minister will immediately refer the congregation to the Office of the Bishop for further conversation.

## **Continuing Education**

---

In support of the 1997 Churchwide Assembly resolution, the Office of the Bishop expects all rostered ministers to participate annually in 50 hours of continuing education in order to keep their ministry skills sharp and to keep current on ministry issues in our rapidly changing context. It is most helpful to develop a plan for continuing education in consultation with your Mutual Ministry Committee or other support group. All first-call ministers are required to participate in First Call Theological Education. This is a program requiring 25 hours of designated study and 25 hours of elective continuing education each of the first three years of ministry.

## **Colleague Contact**

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Experience has shown that some rostered ministers who encounter difficulties in their ministry have become isolated from their colleagues. The Office of the Bishop expects that all rostered ministers in our synod will have regular contact with colleagues. This may occur through conference minister gatherings, pericope studies or other informal settings. However, in order to assure adequate opportunity for collegial support, the ELCA and the Office of the Bishop in Florida-Bahamas have organized conference colleague groups, with each conference dean convening the gatherings.

## **Synodical Involvement**

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The Office of the Bishop expects that all rostered ministers will be involved in the life and work of our synod. Each rostered minister is expected to attend the Synod Assembly and the Conference on Ministry annually. Each rostered minister files a report to the Bishop annually. Each pastor will lead the effort in his or her congregation to increase the financial covenant support given to the synod and the ELCA (see C9.03.c.4), moving toward a goal of 15% of undesignated congregational income. It is also expected that each rostered minister will support our life together through personal involvement and congregational participation in conference, synod and churchwide committees, workshops and ministry opportunities.

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*SECTION 11*  
*Additional Resources*

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- A. Mission, Vision & Values Statement
- B. The Definition and Guidelines for Discipline Summary
- C. A Summary of the Policy on Sexual Ethics Related to Sexual Misconduct in Ministry with Congregational Statement of Affirmation
- D. Keeping the Church a Safe and Sacred Place for All!
- E. A Safe Place for All God's Children
- F. Enrich & Transform: Welcoming LGBTQ Candidates into the Call Process

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# Florida-Bahamas Synod

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the Florida-Bahamas Synod is to boldly share Christ,  
passionately make disciples, and do justice in the world.

The purpose of the Office of the bishop is to **ignite** and **connect** congregations in  
boldly sharing Christ, passionately making disciples, and faithfully doing justice in  
the world.

### VALUES

In our **IDENTITY**, we value:

Profound faith in Jesus Christ!

Deep roots in Lutheran heritage!

Passion for Mission and Mission Support!

In our **RELATIONSHIPS**, we value:

Commitment to loving relationships!

Spirit of compassion and humility!

Openness to all people!

In our **SERVICE**, we value:

Integrity in word and deed!

Team spirit with partners!

Excellence in ministry!

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# *Definition and Guidelines for Discipline Summary*

## *Rostered Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

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“As an expression of its life in the gospel of Jesus Christ, this church embraces disciplinary processes of counseling, admonition, and correction, with the objective of forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing. Simultaneously, out of deep concern for effective extension of the gospel, this church remains alert to the high calling of discipleship in Jesus Christ. The rostered ministers of this church, as persons charged with special responsibility for the proclamation of the gospel, are to seek to reflect the new life in Christ, avoiding that which would make them stumbling blocks to others. To that end, this church recognizes that there is behavior that is deemed to be incompatible with ordained ministry and that calls for disciplinary action. The following definitions and guidelines do not set forth the high expectations this church has of its rostered ministers. Other documents and guides have been and will be developed for that purpose. The normative expectations of this church for its rostered ministers focus upon faithful and effective exercise of ministerial leadership. In all matters of morality and personal ethics, this church expects its rostered ministers to be exemplary in conduct. These definitions and guidelines describe the grounds for which rostered ministers may be subject to discipline according to the practice of this church. Their purpose is juridical: to assist in the processes of consultation, discipline, and appeals” (page 1).

**YOU WILL FIND** the complete document for *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline* at [fbsynod.com/resources/transitions](http://fbsynod.com/resources/transitions).

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# *A Summary of the Policy on Sexual Ethics Related to Sexual Misconduct in Ministry*

## *Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA*

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**This summary** contains the introduction and topics that are defined and discussed in the full version of the policy that can be found at [www.fbsynod.org](http://www.fbsynod.org), click on “Resources” tab, and then on “Rostered Ministers”, then on “Boundaries and Training”

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Sexuality is a good gift of God. The faithful response to God who has created us male and female is our commitment to use our sexuality only in ways that glorify God.

When God's gift of sexuality is used faithfully, the Church is a safe place for all to worship, learn, work, and be helped in a manner that is free from sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment. When the Church becomes an unsafe place, the integrity of the gospel is impaired, particularly among those who are victimized.

The Florida-Bahamas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is committed to preventing sexual misconduct within the church and to responding with justice and compassion when such misconduct occurs. This Statement of Policy describes how this Synod intends to fulfill these commitments. This Synod recognizes that responding to allegations of sexual misconduct requires determination, sensitivity, flexibility, respect and care for all persons affected, including the victim, the rostered minister, their families and friends, the congregation, this Synod, and the whole church.

This policy is intended to provide a framework for guidance in dealing with these cases while preserving this Synod's discretion to treat each person and each case in a manner necessitated by differing facts, circumstances, and needs of those affected. This policy cannot be imposed as rigid law, binding this Synod and others to its dictates; it must be interpreted and applied compassionately in accordance with the theological and biblical principles of the Gospel.

- A. Definitions
- B. The Role of Congregations
- C. Role of This Synod

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## **II. SYNOD POLICY**

An ELCA Strategy for Responding to Sexual Abuse in the Church (Nov. 1992) recommended that nine elements be include in any synodical policy regarding minister sexual misconduct. This Synod has decided to incorporate those nine elements as follows:

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| A. Adequate Preparation                   | E. Assess the Information         |
| B. Initial Contact—First Response         | F. Consultation or Advisory Panel |
| C. Initial Investigation of the Complaint | G. Formal Hearing                 |
| D. Conversation with the Rostered Person  | H. Disclosure                     |
|   | I. Follow-up                      |

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# *Congregational Statement of Affirmation*

## **POLICY ON SEXUAL ETHICS IN MINISTRY**

### *Florida-Bahamas Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

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**(Full Name of Congregation)**

The community of faith needs to be a safe place for all. When God's gift of sexuality is used faithfully, the church can be a safe and sacred place for all to worship, learn and be about the mission of Jesus Christ. Our proclamation of the Gospel is impaired when our church community becomes an unsafe place because of sexual exploitation, abuse or misconduct.

**(Congregation's name)** affirms the Policy on Sexual Ethics in Ministry of the Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA. The commitment of **(Congregation's name)** is to make readily available to members and friends of this congregation information about sexual misconduct and the means to respond if a person feels appropriate sexual boundaries are being crossed. Sexual misconduct includes sexual intercourse or other physical intimacies outside the bonds of marriage, improper sexual advances, inappropriate sexual innuendoes and jokes, intrusive touching, or other offensive and unwelcome sexually oriented behavior.

When the sexual misconduct involves a rostered minister, this congregation recognizes the need to immediately contact the Office of the Bishop by telephone (813/876-7660), by email at ([bishop@fbsynod.org](mailto:bishop@fbsynod.org)), by letter, or by personal visit. Communications may be addressed to the current bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod, 3838 West Cypress Street, Tampa, Florida, 33607-4897, and marked "confidential." In certain situations, such as child abuse, statutory rape, and sexual harassment, the law often requires notification of the proper civil authorities of the alleged misconduct.

Furthermore, sexual misconduct by any lay leader, teacher, congregant or other person associated with this congregation should be reported to the Pastor of **(name of congregation)**. Such notification of sexual misconduct should be made immediately by telephone (**church number**), by letter, or by personal visit to the pastor. Communications should be addressed to the Rev. **(Name of Pastor)** at **(name and address of congregation)** and marked "confidential." The Pastor will then consult the Office of the Bishop to determine the appropriate response to make to the report of sexual misconduct.

The commitment of **(name of congregation)** is to provide a prompt and careful response to such reports, and to assure that all persons involved are treated with respect and provided pastoral care. Copies of the first contact brochure, *Keeping the Church a Safe and Sacred Place for All*, as well as the copies of the synod's policy on Sexual Ethics in Ministry will be made available to all in the congregation **(and school, if applicable)**.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Congregation Council Executive Committee

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Congregation Council Executive Committee

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

### ***Sexual misconduct is against the policies of the ELCA.***

The Florida-Bahamas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America works in cooperation with member congregations to prevent, detect, and remedy the effects of sexual misconduct within the Church.

The Florida-Bahamas Synod is strongly committed to working with Church agencies and local parishes to insure that the Church at every level is free from any form of sexual harassment or misconduct. All forms of sexual misbehavior are unacceptable within the Church and are subject to appropriate mediation and/or disciplinary action. Such a policy complements the remedies provided in civil and criminal law for sexual misconduct and harassment.

The Church should be a safe place where people can worship, learn, work, love and receive care in a manner that is free from sexual misconduct.

#### ***WHO CAN HELP?***

If you believe you are a victim of sexual misconduct or harassment within the Church, please contact Bishop Pedro Suarez or a member of the Florida-Bahamas Synod Response Team:

Bishop's Office  
3838 W. Cypress St.  
Tampa, FL 33607  
(813) 876-7660 x225

Rev. Ellen Cross  
Retired Minister  
Jacksonville  
(904) 318-5436

Connie Schmucker, Deacon  
Assistant to the Bishop  
Leadership  
(813) 876-7660 x228

Rev. Khader EL-Yateem  
Assistant to the Bishop/DEM  
South Region  
(813) 440-1590

Rev. Rob Carlson  
Assistant to the Bishop/DEM  
North Region  
(813) 498-8458

*Go to [fbsynod.com](http://fbsynod.com) to download and copy this brochure*



# **Keeping the Church a Safe and Sacred Place for All**

## ***Responding to Sexual Misconduct***

Resources for safer congregations in the  
Florida-Bahamas Synod



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

**T**he Church needs to be a safe place for all. Every level of the Church and every agency and congregation affiliated with the Church must be free of sexual misconduct. When God's gift of sexuality is used faithfully, the Church is a safe place for all to worship, learn, work, play, and be helped in a manner that is free from sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment. When the Church becomes an unsafe place, the integrity of the Gospel is impaired, particularly among those who are victimized.

Because rostered ministers are in a position of power, they should not violate another person's spiritual, emotional, or physical well-being. On the contrary, rostered ministers have the responsibility of protecting the boundaries of persons, especially those who are vulnerable. Young people, as well as individuals experiencing life crisis situations like grief, familial conflict, or emotional turmoil of marital conflict, separation or divorce, are especially vulnerable to victimization.

#### ***What does sexual misconduct within the Church include?***

- Sexual advances, which may or may not include sexual intercourse
- Requests for sexual favors
- Implied or blatant threats
- Innuendo, humor, and jokes about sex or gender-specific traits
- Suggestive or insulting whistling, gestures, or leering
- Offensive contact (patting, pinching, brushing against the body), attempted or actual fondling or kissing, or any other form of sexualized behavior, including intercourse
- Requiring submission to sexual conduct or communication in order to obtain the services of the Church, or to be employed there
- Sexual conduct or communication that interferes with employment or the services received from the church or those affiliated with the church
- Any other sexual conduct or communication that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment

#### ***"Mutual Consent?"***

The belief that there was mutual consent does not exonerate the accused rostered minister. Sexual misconduct results when those in positions of authority use that authority to create an intimidating or hostile environment by violating the healthy emotional and relational boundaries that are vital in establishing trust in that relationship. From the perspective of this synod, there is no mutual consent.

#### ***What Can you do?***

If you feel you have been subjected to sexual misconduct within the church:

- Say no to the individual. Be direct and firm. Tell the person without apology that you want the behavior to stop.
- Keep records of what happened and when. Document dates, times, places, witnesses, and the nature of the misconduct. Save letters, cards, or notes.
- Contact a member of the Response Team. It takes courage to come forward and report an incident of sexual misconduct. We will make every effort to respond to you with respect and care.

#### ***The Response Team***

The Response Team members, whose names and contact information are on the back panel of this brochure, are available to hear reports of church-related sexual misconduct. They will listen carefully and act expediently on your report. They reflect the church's care and concern for you and will begin an immediate response. Specific allegations against a named rostered minister will be relayed to the bishop's office. The members of the Response Team act as representatives of the bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod of the ELCA. Please remember:

- Don't blame yourself.
- Don't delay. Misconduct may continue if you delay.
- Don't keep it to yourself. You will help yourself and others by speaking out.
- Don't forget that sexual misconduct is a violation of Church policy and in many cases violates the law.

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## Resources Available from the Synod Resource Center

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***Safe Sanctuaries by Joy Melton\****

The author outlines a process for developing policies and procedures to reduce the risk of child abuse in the church. The book also contains suggestions and sample forms.

***Safe and Secure by Jeff Hanna (Alban Institute)\****

The author offers guidelines for staff, volunteers and facilities including legal and ethical ramifications for congregations.

\* Available from the Synod Resource Center.



**Florida-Bahamas Synod**  
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3838 West Cypress Street • Tampa, Florida 33607  
813.876.7660 • [www.fbsynod.com](http://www.fbsynod.com) • [info@fbsynod.org](mailto:info@fbsynod.org)

## A Safe Place for All God's Children: Child Abuse Prevention Resources

*But Jesus called them and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them: for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs."*

*Luke 18:16*

### How Safe is Your Congregation?

The congregations that make up the Florida-Bahamas Synod in partnership with the Office of the Bishop are committed to developing strong and healthy ministries with our young people. This resource is provided to further our continued efforts to make all congregations safe and welcoming places.

### Group's Church Volunteer Central

In addition to providing tools to recruit, train, and inspire volunteers, membership also enables a congregation access to a variety of reliable, thorough background checks. There are no annual minimum orders or additional activation fees. You will get up-to-date information about the constant changes in the security business. Plus you'll find forms, releases, waivers, letters, articles, online training sessions, and other resources. <http://www.churchvolunteercentral.com/>

### Ministry Safe

A five-part safety program that creates overlapping layers of protection to ensure no situation is overlooked consists of awareness training, skillful screening process, policies & procedures, background checks, and monitoring & oversight. <http://ministrysafe.com/>

### First Advantage/Volunteer Advantage

LexisNexis Volunteer Screening provides nonprofit organizations with innovative, cost effective, background check solutions that help you provide a safe environment for the people you serve and at the same time, protect and promote the integrity and reputation of your organization. <https://volunteer.fadv.com/pub/>



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The author offers guidelines for staff, volunteers and facilities including legal and ethical ramifications for congregations.

\* Available from the Synod Resource Center.

# Enrich and Transform

## Welcoming LGBTQ Candidates into the Call Process

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

—Romans 12:2



EXTRAORDINARY  
LUTHERAN  
MINISTRIES

Whenever we embrace those on the margins of church or society, we open ourselves to transformation. We must always see transformation as our ultimate goal, not assimilation. Differences must not be merely tolerated but celebrated as change agents that first challenge us but then both enrich and transform us.

An offered guide for call committees considering the diverse gifts of candidates, including those who are LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer).



# Purpose of this Resource

*Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. —Romans 15:7*

This guide is offered by Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM) in response to congregations and synods who have asked for resources to help open their doors more widely to the gifts of LGBTQ leaders in our church. ELCA Churchwide and Synod offices provide guidance on the call process in general and this guide is not a duplication of their important work. Our guide is an additional resource for call committees during the process of discernment and exploration with candidates.

We hope this resource will provide call committees with some tips, questions, and inspiration as you explore openness to the full diversity of gifted and called leaders in our church, including LGBTQ persons.

*Let the Holy Spirit guide and lead you through the entire process.*

*—John Hedlund, Call Committee Member  
Light of the World Lutheran Church, Farmington, MN*



Rev. Jenny Mason  
Light of the World Lutheran Church, Farmington, MN

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## Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries

Freed and compelled by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to proclaim God's love and seek justice for all, Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries envisions a church where all may serve God according to their callings.

Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries affirms and supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) rostered leaders and those pursuing a call to rostered leadership, while engaging allied congregations and ministries to proclaim God's love and justice for all people. Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries does this work through three main programs: Candidacy Accompaniment, Ministry Engagement, and Proclaim—a professional community for LGBTQ rostered leaders and seminarians. Learn more at [www.elm.org](http://www.elm.org).

## Introduction:

*So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!*  
— 1 Corinthians 5:17

Great challenges are taking place in the lives of many congregations. These challenges can be exciting and energizing. One way to capture the excitement of the future of congregational ministry would be to talk to a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and/or queer (LGBTQ) seminarian, pastor, or rostered leader in our church. LGBTQ identified people in committed relationships were welcomed onto the ELCA roster in 2009. This marks a new day for our whole church. The Spirit is indeed moving! And we believe LGBTQ leaders have unique gifts to offer our church in this new day.

With the shift in church policies new doors are opening. These open doors permit the entrance of gifts that have not always been fully recognized by the church and invite people of all kinds who have perhaps never felt welcomed in the church before. LGBTQ seminarians, candidates, and rostered leaders are eager to engage this New Day in partnership with congregations and ministries.

Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries has made a brief 6 minute video overview of our work. This video, ELM Today, gives you a sense of the current state of LGBTQ leaders in our church - both the gifts they have to offer and the need for communities to welcome and embrace those gifts. The video is on the front page of our website ([www.elm.org](http://www.elm.org)).

*It was exciting that God provided and called a wonderfully gifted, strong Lutheran pastor to minister to our children, youth and young adults. Just 5 years ago, this call wouldn't have been possible. We all (congregations as well as Pastor Laura) would have lost out on so much. Now, as the mother of daughters, I'm excited that they have Pastor Laura as an example and a spiritual leader.*

— Lynn Kriser, Call Committee member,  
St. Stephen Evangelical Lutheran Church, Michigan



Rev. Laura Kuntz Calvary Lutheran Church,  
St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Lansing, MI

*This is the most positive group of colleagues that I gather with. Everywhere else in the church, people are wringing their hands and pulling their hair out and talking about the fear and the anxiety and here we're talking about dreams, and we're talking about the future and we're talking about hope. And so I love getting together with the folks here at Proclaim because they have a vision for what the church is becoming, and I'm just not hearing that and finding that in other areas of the church right now.*

— Rev. Mark Erson,  
St John's Lutheran Church, New York City, NY



# Experiencing a Diversity of Leaders

The need for a supply pastor or preacher is often part of the early stages of the call process. This is a perfect chance to get to know some diverse pastors with different styles. ELM has a list of LGBTQ pastors, candidates, and seminarians who want to do pulpit supply ([www.elm.org/proclaim-pulipt-supply](http://www.elm.org/proclaim-pulipt-supply)). Also ask your synod for their list of supply pastors, paying particular attention to those who are different from your previous pastor. Now is a good time to shake things up and see different leadership and preaching styles.

*I'd love to at some point in time serve in a rural setting. Mainly for me it's about community--knowing and being known. I think the thing that I learned is to not immediately dismiss a congregation because of their size or location. I did some pulpit supply in a small rural town in Minnesota and Maja and I were welcomed warmly. People felt LGBT folk in the church and in the pulpit wasn't an issue for them anymore. They were more concerned that I wasn't a Packers fan!*

—Cara Knutson, First Call Candidate

## Beginning your Work

Thank you for answering YES to this call to serve on the call committee. Your team is now entrusted with the process of mutual discernment to choose the best person to be your new pastor. Call committees are selected to be representative of the congregation and to include diverse voices that may not often be heard. Throughout the process, you can always be looking for ways to include others' voices and perspectives, even if they don't sit on the committee.

It may be easiest to think about a new pastor in comparison with previous pastors. Work to be open to diverse people who are quite different from your previous pastor. Remember that this is an opportunity for transformation in your congregation!

In the midst of this process be open and honest about your fears and concerns, including if you are nervous about LGBTQ candidates. Seek to challenge your own stereotypes. Engage in dialogue together. Pray. Don't let fears guide your process.

Also, we'd encourage you not to preemptively rule candidates out. Perhaps you are in a rural setting or conservative area or you don't have any LGBTQ families in your community.

If these are concerns of yours, engage in conversation with a candidate about them, but don't automatically rule a candidate out or make assumptions. There are LGBTQ candidates who feel called to rural ministry or to serve in more conservative contexts. The LGBTQ community is a diverse community of individuals.

Your call committee may watch videos provided by your synod about the call process. These are helpful. We really recommend you also take the time to watch, *Sailing on Faith*, a 25 minute video about the experience of a call committee who opened up to the Holy Spirit as they called a new leader. The experience ended up very differently from what they had initially expected! The video will help your committee think about diverse candidates in the call process. This video was made by the United Church in Christ, a full communion partner of the ELCA. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4\\_WlEXBjqQ&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4_WlEXBjqQ&feature=relmfu)

You may also want to show this video at an adult forum so others in the congregation can join the conversation about considering diverse candidates.



# Beginning Your Ministry Site Profile

*The call process brings people closer together and really makes the congregation take a hard look at what is important to them and what their mission in this world is.*

—Marybeth Newton, Call Committee Chair St Andrew's Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA

One of the first steps in the call process is developing a profile of your congregation or ministry site. This is a good opportunity to introduce the idea of considering LGBTQ or otherwise diverse candidates for your new pastor. You may be creating a survey for your congregation or hosting a conversation as you develop your site profile. Here are a few suggested questions your congregation or call committee may want to consider at this point in the process:

- What are the ministry needs of the greater community? What are some of the cultures/people/issues that we want to engage with the message of the Gospel and the ministries of our church?
- What do we want to say about ourselves as we call a pastor – what statement do we want to make? Do we want to announce to our community that we are open, and are excited about ministries of justice and reconciliation? How can the call we extend become a statement of the ministry we are attempting to engage?

*Spend enough time together to develop trust around all the issues you and the congregation want to see in a new pastor. Sexual orientation is just one aspect and probably not the most important issue. Try to separate your own responses from what you think the congregation response is likely to be. Remember that you really don't know what others responses will be so don't assume. Talk about it.*

—Ruth Rinard, Call Committee Member Immanuel Lutheran Church, Amherst, MA

- To what sort of mission and ministry is the Spirit of God calling us? Developing a spirituality of openness and challenge allows the process itself to become an agent of the work of the Spirit of God.
- How would our congregation feel about calling a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person to serve as our pastor?

After you consider the opportunities for ministry in your community, and you begin to broaden the range of mission and pastoral directions, then you can ask:

**What sort of person can best work with us to respond to the call of the Holy Spirit in our church and in our community?**

*The process to call a new senior pastor following the retirement of our former senior pastor was deliberative. We spent a good deal of time developing a congregational profile, which called forth the needs of the congregation now and projected its needs into the future. In presenting the candidate, we mapped our analysis of the gifts of the candidate to the defined needs of the congregation. We were able to demonstrate, through the written comments of the candidate, the information that emerged in our interviews with him, and comments we heard in extensive reference checking, that the gifts of the candidate we recommended aligned nearly perfectly with the defined needs of the congregation. In our presentation, we certainly disclosed his sexual orientation and his role in the historic actions of the church, but we focused primarily on his gifts for ministry.*

—Claire Hoyum, Call Committee member Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN

# Why Consider Calling an LGBTQ Pastor

The church asks candidates to be open to the call of the whole church. We invite you to also be open to and celebrate the whole diversity of candidates that God has called to serve the church.

*For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.*  
—Romans 12:4-8

Why consider calling an LGBTQ pastor?  
Here are a variety of responses from LGBTQ seminarians, candidates, and rostered leaders:

*Many people think “If they can deal with that Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Trans minister, they’ll have no problem with me being \_\_\_\_\_.”*  
— Dug Swank

*Great evangelism effort, if [churches] will call a gay/partnered pastor the door opens wide.*  
— Rev. Terry Hagensen

*We see the margins and thin places in life and know from experience that is where God is working.*  
— Alex Raabe

*Because kids need to see and know that everyone is welcome.* —Rev. Angela Nelson

*It also makes a powerful statement of welcome to the community. They are not just making a statement of welcome, they are living it.*  
—Rev. Dr. Dawn Roginski

*A congregation should consider calling an LGBTQ candidate because, like any other candidate, we bring our own set of skills and abilities to their local congregation. In June, my congregation hung the pride flag at church throughout June. I reminded my church council that the flag “wasn’t just about being inviting to ‘the gays,’ but that it was a sort of ‘code’ to the*

*community that Trinity is an open, thoughtful, progressive congregation.” Having an openly LGBTQ pastor accomplishes the same thing!*  
— Rev. Peggy Yingst

*In the first couple of months of ministry I’ve already encountered people who feel comfortable sharing parts of their lives and their family members’ lives with me in a way that they haven’t been able to with a pastor before. Because I’m open about my sexuality they know I am safe to talk to, and when that happens it is a gift given to both of us.*  
— Rev. Laura Kuntz

*There are some amazing LGBTQ rostered leaders who, against all odds, desire to answer God’s call to serve in ministry. So, here are a few characteristics that I see as being good reasons to considering calling someone like myself: faithfulness, creativity, perseverance, honesty, loyalty, truth-telling, humility, etc. (I was going to write all the fruits of the Spirit, but I think you get the idea.)* —Rev. Jenny Mason



*Most of us have had to learn something about a costly love for a broken-yet-holy church. It’s a good moment in history to have a pastor who has begun the work of learning to love the church in this way, and while many non-LGBTQ pastors may have done this work, almost all LGBTQ pastors will have had to do it as a core part of their preparation for ministry.*  
—Carolina Glauster, First Call Candidate





*I began my call as a tall, white, educated, straight man... since coming out, my eyes have been opened to injustice in remarkable ways- and not just my own personal experiences with it. My heart is just more in tune with it. I notice it as I walk the streets and ride the buses, as I interact with people of all sorts... I think as LGBT folk, we carry unique stories lived experiences that make us very in tune to the cries of the marginalized.*

*—Rev. Paul Clark,  
Fresno State University Campus Ministry*

*LGBTQ candidates provide a call committee with candidates who are, more than most candidates,*

*--able to understand the faith challenges to young adults who have mostly abandoned church traditions that they see as hypocritical,*

*--able to walk with people through the wildernesses of their lives, because they have been in and through those wildernesses,*

*--able to value and care for each child of God in a congregation, because they have learned what it means to be accepted by Jesus,*

*--able and excited to preach the Gospel, for the Good News has, for most, been denied them in the past.*

*— Chris Wogaman, First Call Candidate*



*LGBTQ candidates bring a much needed trajectory for ministry in today's world. We've been excluded and included. In the past few decades there aren't many groups of people who can say that. I think one of the big barriers for churches is the ability to speak to the experience of those who feel unwelcome or left out. Christians have tended to only include those who align with their narrow interpretations...so many people view the church as a closed off place. I think LGBTQ people bring just the right combination of experiences to allow them to connect those who have known the church for their whole lives and those who feel the church has repeatedly rejected or abused them. We are a group of healers.*

*—Rev. Caleb Crainer, St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA*



# Working with the congregation

If you feel like the whole congregation needs to be involved in the conversation of opening up your call process to include LGBTQ candidates, here are some ideas:

- Have a local LGBTQ pastor come and talk about their call to ministry.
- If you are not Reconciling in Christ (RIC), consider entering into that process of public welcome of LGBTQ people. <http://www.reconcilingworks.org/what/ric/about-reconciling-in-christ>
- Have an adult education forum about Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries. Invite someone from the congregation who is connected with ELM to speak. Or, contact ELM to see if we might have someone in your area who could come and be part of your discussion.
- Host a panel discussion. Depending on your local resources, panel members could include: a member of another congregation who has been through a call process with an LGBTQ pastor, a local LGBTQ pastor or intern, supportive synod staff member, a person connected with ELM (be in touch - we might have someone in your area!), a member of an internship committee that supported an LGBTQ intern, etc.
- Watch the ELM Today video - 6 minutes, available on the ELM website. Or the Sailing on Faith video mentioned above (25 minutes). Why consider opening your call process to a gifted and called LGBTQ leader?
- Include a question or two in your congregational study/discernment about considering diverse candidates, and LGBTQ candidates specifically.



*It helps to have already affirmed and embraced our RIC status. The congregation is open and affirming in an area (Vallejo and Solano County) where LGBTQ people have few welcomes, and that is an important part of the congregation's self-identity.*

—Marilyn Matevia, Call Committee member  
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Vallejo, CA



Seminarian Gus Barnes, Jr. and Rev. Angela Nelson

*Be open about what you are doing ... but in an organic way. Discussions need to occur in smaller groups - or in some less than overt way. For our congregation in upper middle class suburbs - we needed to tread lightly. Waving a rainbow flag would not have been productive.*

—Gary Clark, Call Committee member Abiding  
Presence Lutheran Church, Rochester Hills, MI

# Considering a First Call Candidate

*For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you — or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. —Romans 1:11-12*

Has your congregation considered a First Call candidate?

This might be a good conversation to have among your call committee members and perhaps with your synod staff. Being a First Call congregation has blessings and challenges and is worth exploring. Here are some reasons you might consider opening your call process to First Call candidates:

- candidates often come fresh out of seminary with lots of ideas, energy, excitement
- there's room for mutual learning - you are both teacher and learner
- your community can be instrumental in helping shape a pastor for the rest of their ministry - this is a gift to the whole church
- many first call pastors bring experience from previous careers
- the synod supports first call candidates through First Call Theological Education
- you get to be part of an ordination or a consecration
- candidates are aware of current trends in theology and church planning
- there is curiosity and excitement to work together

*We as a committee made a conscious decision to focus on the qualities and qualifications the candidate needed to be the pastor of our church. We prayed and thought whether our congregation was ready to be supportive to an LGBTQ candidate and a "new" pastor. We realized that this was an opportunity to grow and practice what we believe. We were resolved that some people might leave.*  
—Call Committee member

## Getting the Word Out

If you are open to exploring LGBTQ candidates, it's a good idea to explicitly and proactively let the synod know you are open to the full diversity of candidates that God has called, including LGBTQ candidates.

You are also invited to let Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries know about your call opportunity. Because there are still fewer call possibilities for LGBTQ candidates and people might not hear about such openings, letting us spread the word is another way to expand your reach for the right fit for ministry. Interested candidates would contact your synod office and go through the same channels as other candidates. Contact information for ELM is at the end of this guide.

*My only suggestion is that congregations focus first and only on the needs of the congregation's ministry and mission. Many gifted LGBTQ candidates have been waiting far too long for their gospel gifts to be recognized and invited into ministry. Congregations should not constrain their access to those gifts by artificially limiting the pool of candidates they are willing to consider.*  
—Claire Hoyum, Call Committee member  
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN





# Interviewing Candidates

Depending on your synod, synod staff will provide candidate profiles for one or more candidates. The written materials should be used as an introduction, not as a comprehensive description of this person's gifts and fit for your ministry. Stretch yourself to consider candidates who are different from your previous pastor. Let the Holy Spirit surprise you!

Face to face interviews give everyone involved a chance to see each other as real people. This means you can cut through superficial issues to focus on the passions and ministry ideas of both the candidate and the congregation.

Plan your questions to bring out stories of the candidate's experiences of life and background. When interviewing an LGBTQ candidate, most questions will be the same as those you would ask any candidate. If members of the call committee are nervous or unsure about interviewing an LGBTQ candidate, ELM may be able to arrange a practice interview with a pastor from Proclaim, the professional community for publicly identified LGBTQ Lutheran rostered leaders, candidates, and seminarians. Additionally, we, and maybe the synod, are able to connect you with a member of a congregation who has served on a call committee and engaged with LGBTQ candidates.

Sometimes, if people are unfamiliar with LGBTQ folks, they can feel awkward, not wanting to ask the wrong question or use the wrong words. Below are a few sample questions and tips. We also have an attached glossary of terms that may help. But openness, honesty and a bit of grace will serve you well!

## Sample Questions

- How do you see being LGBTQ as a gift to your ministry and to the wider church?
- Being a pastor is challenging work for anyone, but the discrimination that LGBTQ

pastors sometimes experience in the church and society could add additional stress to your work as a pastor. What are some ways you take care of yourself when life gets stressful?

- How do you define family? If you do not have the support of your family of origin, what are some of the other ways you have created family or participate in communities of accountability?
- Are there ways in which your coming out story and your call to ministry are linked?
- How is your identity as an LGBTQ person linked with your identity as a child of God?
- When so much of the church has said 'no' to LGBTQ people, why did you choose to remain part of the church?
- How as a congregation can we support you as a publicly identified LGBTQ pastor? What challenges do you anticipate, and in what ways can we partner with you to meet those challenges? What joys do you anticipate? How can we celebrate those with you?

Be prepared for a variety of responses to your questions. Perhaps you will hear some things you didn't expect. For example, LGBTQ people come from and create many different kinds of families that may or may not look like your own. Or, some LGBTQ people might have experienced a lot of pain and hurt from the church, which may be hard to hear if that is not your experience. Take time to process responses and try to keep an open mind. Seek to uncover the whole person, rather than just focusing on one aspect of their experience or identity.

*When I came out, [the call committee] asked themselves and invited me to be part of the conversation, "How might calling an LGBTQ candidate help us better live out our commitment to an inclusive welcome?"*

—Rev. Steven Wilco,  
Immanuel Lutheran Church, Amherst, MA

## What words to use?

## How do I not offend someone?

It is always best to let a candidate choose if and how they want to self-identify (pronouns, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status, etc). Additionally, candidates should be encouraged to self-identify in terms of their relationship. LGBTQ couples may use various terms to describe their relationship, including partner, spouse, wife, husband, etc. Ask how the candidate identifies their relationship and then use those terms respectfully.

As a general guide, don't ask questions you wouldn't feel comfortable answering yourself. And be patient with the process and with yourselves. Trust that the Spirit is working!

*I remember they asked me how I would handle people in the congregation who might not be super comfortable with the idea of an out gay pastor. I felt good about my response which was that I wasn't going to argue with anyone or try to "defend" my call. I told them I had no interest in "convincing" anyone that gay people can be pastors...that sort of posture only leads to more consternation. Instead, I'd be happy to orchestrate Bible Studies and Forums around LGBTQ topics so we can learn and grow together.*

— Rev. Caleb Crainer, St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA

*The call committee held all its meetings and interviews with candidates at the home of one of our members. We lit a candle at the start of each meeting, a symbol of our invitation to the Holy Spirit to enter our conversations and deliberations.*

*Our committee worked long and hard and faithfully, guided by the Holy Spirit. The pastor we recommended and the congregation called has been a gift to all, evidence of the Spirit's work among us.*

— Claire Hoyum, Call Committee member, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN



*Acknowledge concerns, anxieties, and hopes up front. If the committee is unsure of the appropriateness of a question, say so. Treat the candidate like a pastor. Educate yourself beforehand if there are sexuality questions you have (read an issue of Out or The Advocate, check the Human Rights Campaign website, etc), but try and keep the conversation on the paperwork of the candidate.*

— Rev. Angela Nelson, Christ Our Emmanuel, Chatham, NY



# Discerning

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. —Romans 12:2*

Hopefully when you meet the right candidate the whole committee will be on the same page and you can easily move to the next step, clear in the Spirit's call. But sometimes there may be division within the committee. If the candidate is LGBTQ, there may be division about whether that candidate is the right recommendation, or perhaps someone on your committee is not open to calling an LGBTQ person at all. Try to get to the root of the objection. Is it fear? Lack of knowledge? Concern for others might react? A sincere belief that same-sex relationships are wrong? Immerse yourself in prayer. Seek guidance from the synod or others who may help you in this challenge.

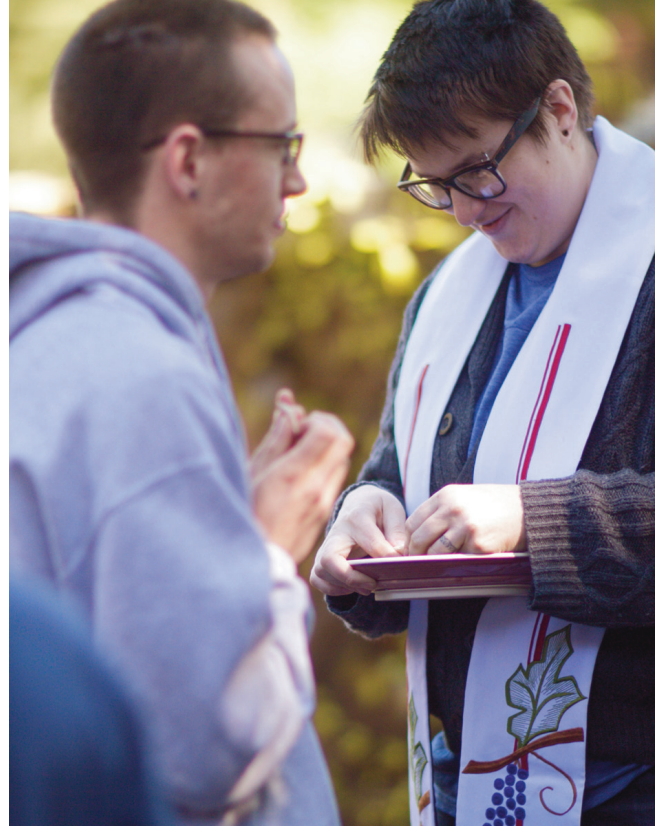
A common concern is wondering if some people will leave the congregation if you put an LGBTQ candidate forward. The reality is that you will probably lose and gain members in any transition. Try not to let that overshadow your sense of the Spirit's calling. In some congregations where a group of people is unhappy about calling an LGBTQ pastor, the call committee or church leadership has urged those folks to commit to trying it out for 6 months. When people are actively engaged in relationship and ministry together often times hearts will change. But in the end, it still may happen that someone will leave. And, it may happen that many will arrive.

*Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart.*

*—2 Corinthians 4:1*

*As head of the call committee, I made a PowerPoint presentation with an edited video interview series that I put together with Pastor Caleb so the congregation could "get to know him" further prior to a vote.*

*—Marybeth Newton, Call Committee Chair St Andrew's Lutheran Church, Los Angeles*



*When we presented the candidate, we received overwhelmingly positive response. But we also received messages of concern. Several committed, long-term members were deeply troubled. The call vote was 91.5% positive--more supportive than the vote to call the first woman as senior pastor. We lost about a dozen members over the call decision, and the congregation continues to grieve those losses. But we have also seen tremendous growth since the call decision. The candidate's warmth and outreach to those who did not support his call have helped bring some of those who were concerned into the community of support. Many of our new members have been attracted to our congregation because of its commitment to warm liturgical worship, fine preaching, excellent music, outreach locally and abroad, and joyful welcome to all. We are larger and more energetic than we were before the call over two years ago.*

*—Claire Hoyum, Call Committee member, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN*

## Recommending a Candidate to the Congregation

Once you have made a decision, communicate the call committee's enthusiasm about this candidate to the congregation! Explain why the chosen candidate is the right one by focusing on what excited the committee about this potential ministry partnership. In many synods the candidate would come to meet congregation members in person before the vote. If this is not the practice in your synod and you think it might be helpful, consider talking with the synod about this possibility. This provides the congregation with a good opportunity to meet and engage with the real person. Or, if that's not possible, perhaps create a video or use Skype. There are lots of creative options!

When introducing an LGBTQ candidate to the congregation, talk with the candidate about how they want to be introduced and if a spouse or family will be accompanying them. If there is a time for open questions with the congregation, perhaps have a member of the call committee moderate. Make sure this candidate is able to talk about their gifts and vision for ministry and that the whole discussion doesn't become only about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

*It's really important to welcome our spouses, if we have them. For them, it's a completely new thing to be an out pastor's spouse, and it takes some getting used to. And know that we are still pinching ourselves for a quite a while that we get to do this thing called rostered ministry again. It makes us kind of giddy!*

—Rev. Jenny Mason,  
Light of the World, Farmington, MN

*Right now I'm inviting myself over to peoples' homes to get to know them better and it means a lot when they ask if my partner would like to come along.*

—Rev. Laura Kuntz,  
Calvary Lutheran Church,  
St. Stephen Lutheran Church, both in Lansing, MI



Rev. Bradley Schmeling  
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN

*One of the biggest blessings for me was that an individual from the congregation approached me after I began and initiated conversations that would eventually lead to our attaining Reconciling In Christ status. I think congregations who aren't already RIC, should remember that joining that community needs to come from the congregation and council first instead of being led by the new gay pastor. I think our RIC status helped me and the congregation communicate more effectively about stresses and histories when thinking through our LGBTQ welcome.*

—Rev. Caleb Crainer,  
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA

## Welcoming a New LGBTQ Pastor

Congratulations on your new partnership in ministry! Your work as a call committee is almost done.

As you welcome your new pastor, we encourage you to:

- Talk openly with your new leader about if/how their family wants to be involved
- Help connect them with ELM and Proclaim if they are not already
- Help connect them with other LGBTQ-friendly pastors and people in the area
- Provide continuing education funds for your pastor to keep learning and being sustained in ministry (the annual Proclaim Retreat is an excellent source of both continuing education and sustaining for ministry)
- Help them set up a Mutual Ministry Committee for reflection and support
- Enjoy getting to know one another!



## Conclusion:

This resource has been prepared by Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries to assist call committees in considering a candidate who is gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer. It may also be helpful to interim pastoral leadership, collegial pastoral networks, transition study groups, congregational profile committees, and other who may be involved in these processes. This resource is not definitive nor comprehensive. However, we do hope this resource can accompany and inform your discernment, address some of your possible concerns, and invite space for the Holy Spirit's work among you.

*Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.*

— 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

## Contact Information

For more information, questions, feedback, or comments, or to let ELM know about a call opportunity in your community, please contact:

Amalia Vagts, Executive Director  
director@elm.org  
563-382-6277

Rev. Jen Rude, Program Director  
programdirector@elm.org

You can also find additional information and resources on our website: [www.elm.org](http://www.elm.org)

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# Short Glossary of Terms

**Accompaniment:** Program of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries – Grassroots, candidate-driven accompaniment for LGBTQ people in Lutheran candidacy. Support and advocacy for LGBTQ persons in the Lutheran candidacy process through direct work with candidates, and relationship and resource development for synods, seminaries, candidacy committees and other church leaders. [www.elm.org/candidacy](http://www.elm.org/candidacy)

**Asexual:** In its broadest sense, asexual describes individuals who are not sexually attracted to others or are not interested in sex. Those who identify as asexual may still be romantically attracted to others.

**Bisexual:** A person emotionally, romantically, sexually and relationally attracted to more than one sex and/or gender, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Because bisexual assumes a binary, male/female paradigm, some individuals now use the term pansexual.

## Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries

**(ELM):** ELM is a self-funded social ministry organization that affirms and supports publicly identified LGBTQ Lutheran rostered leaders and those pursuing a call to rostered leadership while engaging allied congregations and ministries to proclaim God's love and seek justice for all. Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries does this work through three main programs: Proclaim, Accompaniment, and Ministry Engagement. Through this work, ELM ensures that LGBTQ leaders and the ministries they lead can proclaim God's love and seek justice for all people. [www.elm.org](http://www.elm.org)

**Gay:** A word describing a man or a woman who is emotionally, romantically, sexually and relationally attracted to members of the same sex.

**Gender Identity:** One's innermost concept of self as male or female or both or neither—how individuals perceive themselves and what they

call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different than the sex assigned at birth. Individuals are conscious of this between the ages 18 months and 3 years. Most people develop a gender identity that matches their biological sex. For some, however, their gender identity is different from their biological or assigned sex. Some of these individuals choose to socially, hormonally and/or surgically change their sex to more fully match their gender identity.

**Gender Expression:** Refers to the ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, haircut, voice, and other forms of presentation. Gender expression also works the other way as people assign gender to others based on their appearance, mannerisms, and other gendered characteristics. Sometimes, transgender people seek to match their physical expression with their gender identity, rather than their birth-assigned sex. Gender expression should not be viewed as an indication of sexual orientation.

**Genderqueer:** A word people use to describe their own non-standard gender identity or expression.

**Gender Role:** This is the set of roles, activities, expectations and behaviors assigned to females and males by society. Many cultures recognize two basic gender roles: masculine (having the qualities attributed to males) and feminine (having the qualities attributed to females). People who step out of their socially assigned gender roles are sometimes referred to as transgender. Some cultures have three or more gender roles.

**Intersex:** People who are born with physical sex markers (genitals, hormones, gonads or chromosomes) that are neither clearly male nor female

**Lesbian:** A woman who is emotionally, romantically, sexually and relationally attracted to other women.



**LGBTQ:** Often used as shorthand to refer to a variety of people with diverse sexual orientations and/or gender identity. The letters commonly refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.

**Ministry Engagement:** Program of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries – Engaging with congregations and ministries. Seeking to support and create more calls for LGBTQ leaders, while celebrating and highlighting extraordinary congregations and ministries.

**Proclaim:** Program of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries – the professional community for publicly identified LGBTQ Lutheran rostered leaders, candidates, and seminarians. This community gathers annually in retreat for learning and renewal, and connects throughout the year for networking and mutual support. Proclaim is a witness to the Church.

**Queer:** Anyone who chooses to identify as such. This can include, but is not limited to, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and asexual people, etc. This term has different meanings to different people. Some still find it offensive, while others reclaim it to encompass the broader sense of history of the gay rights movement. Can also be used as an umbrella term like LGBT, as in “the queer community.”

**Sexual orientation:** Sexual orientation is an enduring personal quality that inclines people to feel romantic or sexual attraction (or a combination of these) to persons of another sex or gender, the same sex or gender, or to both sexes or more than one gender.

**Transgender.** Sometimes used as an umbrella to describe anyone whose identity or behavior falls outside of stereotypical gender norms. More narrowly defined, it refers to an individual whose gender identity does not match their assigned birth gender. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation (attraction to people of a specific gender.) Therefore, transgender people may additionally

identify as straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

**Transsexual:** Individuals who do not identify with their birth-assigned genders and physically alter their bodies surgically and/or hormonally. This physical transition is a complicated, multi-step process that may take years and may include, but is not limited to, sex reassignment surgery. Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) is a term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person’s “sex”. Not all transgender people choose to, or can afford to, have SRS. While this procedure is often referred to as a sex change operation in popular culture, SRS is the preferred term.

Additional definitions of terms related to sexuality and gender can be found here:

[www.hrc.org/resources/entry/glossary-of-terms](http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/glossary-of-terms)

[www.genderspectrum.org](http://www.genderspectrum.org)

[www.tolerance.org/LGBT-best-practices-terms](http://www.tolerance.org/LGBT-best-practices-terms)

[www.thegenderbook.com](http://www.thegenderbook.com)



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