



SECTION 6

Pastoral Candidates and the Call List

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

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 the active mobility listings:** Pastors from across the church who feel the Spirit stirring them to a new call have uploaded their Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) onto the ELCA database. Bishops and their assistants have access to this internal database and regularly seek potential candidates.
- **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.
- **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.

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. A change in recent years is that now most Call Lists only have one name. The Bishop's Office is working diligently to identify the appropriate candidate, and by waiting to identify a second or third candidate may result in the congregation losing a chance to meet the first candidate (who has taken another call).

With the permission of the bishops of the synods where the pastors are presently serving, the Office of the Bishop contacts potential candidates. This discernment conversation is typically held on Zoom for the Synod staff to get a chance to "meet" candidates and pray with them in discernment. If a candidate expresses 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 may be on multiple call lists, in multiple synods, until they reach the point of being the primary candidate for a congregation. At that point they must withdraw from all other call lists.

When Members and Friends Lift Up Names of Potential Pastoral Candidates

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 can 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

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

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

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 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 Section 6.

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Resource A

Team Ministry Calls

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

Call Processes

Senior/Lead Pastor (Minister of Word and Sacrament):

- 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 or Assistant Pastor (Minister of Word and Sacrament):

- 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.

Deacon (Minister of Word and Service):

- The senior/lead pastor will serve on the call committee for ECLA 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.

Resource C

Notes in Preparation for a Congregation Meeting to Call a Pastor

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. 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.

Outline for Congregation Meeting to Call a Pastor

- 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.



SECTION 7

The Interview Process

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Hebrews 3:2

Receiving the Call List

A representative of the Office of the Bishop will email the call list of candidate names and their Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) to the chair of the call committee. After the list is transmitted, the bishop's representative will review the interview process as well as the *Interview Covenant* 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. Remember, the candidate has been through extensive conversations with the Office of the Bishop before the congregation has received her/his name(s). Their discernment for the congregation and candidate to meet has included more than the documents you receive with the call list. 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 anyone, including the call committee's spouse/partner, family, congregation council members, or anyone else. 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 – including but not limited to:

- internet searches for the candidate
- sermons and worship services online
- blogs and/or other writings, etc.

Setting Up the Interview Dates and Process

The interview process includes several steps including:

- Initial interview, often by Zoom
- In-person interview with the call committee
- Reference Checks
- In-person interview with the congregation council
- Background Checks
- In-person for a congregational meet and greet (prior to the congregational meeting)

Please note, it is often possible for two of these meetings to take place during the same visit.. Congregational leadership should consult with the Office of the Bishop in their planning.

Within two days of receiving the call list, the chair of the call committee shall make an introductory telephone call to each candidate. Note: the candidate(s) receive email communication from the Office of the Bishop about your congregation while you receive communication about the candidate. This initial phone call is to invite the candidate for an interview. If it is impossible to have potential dates from the call committee within 2 days, the chair should at least contact the candidate(s) to share excitement about meeting them (and ask the candidate for their availability). The date, place, and anticipated length of the

interview are worked out with each candidate. Remember, if a call list includes more than one candidate, each candidate should be interviewed in the same format.

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 an email with details will follow and ask each candidate for his/her preferred email contact information. This email, which promptly follows the phone conversation inviting a candidate to interview, confirms the place, time, and expected length of the interview.

A confirmation email should be sent. This email should contain details including:

- Who will meet the Pastor/Deacon at the airport/transportation arrangements
- 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).
- The itinerary for the visit
- Any other expectations

Interview packets may be prepared and sent to candidate(s) 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 (including bio and photo of 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.

Initial "Get to Know You" Interview(s) via Video Conferencing

Most Call Committees conduct an initial "get to know you" interview with the candidate(s). This is conducted over Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or another Video Conferencing service. This allows the call committee to get a feel for a candidate(s) (and vice versa) with minimal time and expenses.

Be mindful to keep the meeting to no more than 90 minutes. This will require a prioritization of questions – what is the most important thing for you to know, and what should the candidate(s) know about you? Additional questions may be asked during the formal in-person interview. Online interviews often follow a format like this:

- Opening Prayer
- Call Committee Introductions
- Candidate Introduction
- Five or six of the most important questions to get a sense of the candidate (be sure to ask why the candidate is interested in your congregation).
- Time for the candidate to ask questions of the committee
- Closing prayer

In preparation for this meeting, make sure to check your Zoom capabilities.

Hosting the Candidate(s) In-Person with the Call Committee

Congregations should pay for the travel expenses of a spouse/partner for at least one meeting but may offer to do so for additional visits if finances permit. One or two members of the call committee should

be designated to serve as host(s) for the candidate(s). This often is the chair of the call committee and one additional person. The hosts will meet and welcome the candidate to town and share the general itinerary of their time together. Please note that it is best practice for no one to be alone with a candidate – there should be at least two people with the candidate.

If overnight accommodation is needed for any of the candidates, arrangements at a hotel 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 the candidate to have an 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. Rental cars and Uber/Lyft are also viable options. Pastoral candidates need to get a sense of the community where they may live!

An informal dinner for the candidate and members of the call 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, conference Dean, 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 who will ask which question and what materials the committee will use to evaluate and assess the candidates. It is helpful to share a copy of the Congregational Ministry Site Profile with the Pastor helping with the practice interview in advance of the meeting. 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

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 provided.

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 ensure that privacy and confidentiality are maintained. If the interview is in a member's home, there should be no other family members present. During the interview stage, it is not appropriate to introduce the candidates to other members of the church or to staff members.

(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 the flow of the meeting: who will ask which questions? Will it be informal? How will follow up questions work?

This helps to provide consistency and clear opportunities for comparisons of responses if there are multiple candidates on a call list. 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. Please note this resource is not an exhaustive list of questions that can be asked. Be sure to ask the Pastor helping with the practice interview which questions you didn't ask but should have.

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. The best questions will ask a candidate to share an experience that illustrates their response (i.e. can you tell us about a time when...)

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 like 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

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. If this was already shared at a Zoom interview, committee members

can share something else about themselves (why do they love this congregation? Why did they become a member there?) The chair may ask the candidate to share “something about yourself” to provide an 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. Call committees should review these questions prior to meeting the candidate.

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, and that the candidate’s references will be contacted. The candidate should also be invited to check the congregation’s references. The time together is closed with prayer. The hosts transport the candidate back to their place of lodging.

Reflections on the Interview

It is often desirable to schedule brief meetings of the call committee following each interview, especially if there is more than one candidate. 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. At this point the call committee may share their impression of the candidate(s) worship and leadership, preaching and other insights from the candidates online presence and references.

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. The discernment is if this candidate/one of these candidates is the right one, or if the right person is not on this call list.

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. If there is not full consensus on how to move forward, 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 is asked to become the "Primary Candidate." If the candidate agrees to become the Primary Candidate for your congregation, they withdraw from any other interview processes. In effect, the congregation and the candidate each agree to not interview anyone else. At that time, the name of that candidate, along with the materials related to that candidate, are presented to the council by the call committee. 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 a candidate to the congregation 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 each of the candidates to release them, and to contact 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 email a note 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 respectful for a chair to contact the candidate first by phone before sending a follow-up email.

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 at this time. Mobility papers for the other candidates are shredded locally by the call committee chair.

A Pastor Withdraws from the Process

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 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 the committee's desire to present the candidate's name to the congregation council and asks if the candidate is willing to be the Primary Candidate. If so, the chair 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 an emailed letter of appreciation. Any expense reimbursement not made at the time of the interview should be included at this time.

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

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)

- 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 same call list; and

(Transition Manual, Section 7)

- 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 call committee 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)

- Within four to six weeks of receiving the call list, the call committee will have interviewed all candidates on the call list (both on zoom and in person) 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. Therefore they will 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)

- 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)

_____ Name <i>(legible signature)</i> , Call Committee Chair	_____ Date
_____ Lutheran Church	
_____ , Florida	

Names of remaining Call Committee members:

_____ Name (legible signature)	_____ Date
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_____ Name (legible signature)	_____ Date
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_____ Name (legible signature)	_____ Date
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_____ Name (legible signature)	_____ Date
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_____ Name (legible signature)	_____ Date
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_____ 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

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. This is not an exhaustive list – add your own. 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.
4. What is your role in Council Meetings?

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 arise, 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 people in crisis or in need of counseling?
2. Describe your special gifts and limitations in the area of ministering to people 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 stagnating 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 involvement 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.

Resource C

Questions Candidates May Ask

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

**Note – this information should first be conveyed by a phone call to the candidate. The phone call should then be followed up with an e-mail to the candidate and the Bishop’s Office.*

*This is a sample for the written communication.**

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

Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." Acts 1:24-25

The Council Receives the Recommendation

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 is not to be shared beyond the council with spouses/partners, families, or the congregation at large. The congregation will learn the details of the candidate when they meet them at the congregational meet and greet. 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*** 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 any 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 of the primary candidate.

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

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 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 and kept confidential.

It is critical that sometime during this visit by the candidate, the president and perhaps one or two others (often the Treasurer) 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 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. However, the healthiest calls will be unanimous or close to it. The council also votes to recommend the compensation package to the congregation.

The motion that the Council will bring to the congregation will be “To Call Rev./Rev. Dr. _____ to serve as _____ at (Congregation) at a Defined Compensation of \$ _____ plus benefits.” This motion is the language that will be on the ballots at the congregation meeting.

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 communication should 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.

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 contact the candidate by and follow up with an email 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.

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 (often the Treasurer), 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 (the ELCA benefits administrator) 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.

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 made in terms of mutuality, with agreement between both parties.

Congregation Reception to Meet the Candidate

It is desirable that the members of the congregation have the opportunity to meet the Primary Candidate (and spouse or partner) at an informal reception on the same weekend as 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 an 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 can 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 the 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

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. Caution must be taken with e-mail, which is too readily forwarded. Care should be taken with e-mails to not include friends and visitors of the congregation. The candidate should be asked to provide a brief bio to share with the congregation.

Setting Up the Congregational Meeting

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 both with the candidate’s availability to meet the

congregation and with the Office of the Bishop. The Florida-Bahamas Synod has a policy of sending a representative of the bishop to be present at congregation meetings to call a Pastor and/or Deacon. (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. Consult chapter 10 of your congregation constitution for information re: calling a special meeting and note chapter 9 re: specifics for calling a Rostered Minister. See *Notes in Preparation for a Congregation Meeting to Call a Pastor*.

Voting Members

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

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 people 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./Rev. Dr. to serve as pastor (or specific position) of the congregation (name) at a defined compensation of \$ _____ plus benefits.”

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 and closes in prayer.

The Letter of Call

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 returned to the Office of the Bishop for signature along with a copy of the **Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor**. The Office of 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

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 (yes, no and abstentions). 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 (C09.01), 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

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

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

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

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 contact the candidate within 48 hours in order to set up a date for the interview.
(Transition Manual, Section 8)

- 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)

- During the visit of the primary candidate:
 - 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.
 - 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 to recommend a candidate to the congregation.
 - The candidate's spouse/partner will meet the council outside of the formal interview, if the opportunity occurs.
 - 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)

- 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)

- 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)

- 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)

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 of the Pastor

Prepared by _____

for the Reverend _____

for the period: _____ to _____

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 at _____ % of defined compensation
2. ELCA Medical-and-Dental Insurance (*check one below*):
 a. Member only c. Member and children e. Coverage waived
 b. Member and spouse d. Member, spouse, and children
3. Other insurance or benefits: _____ \$ _____
_____ \$ _____

C. EXPENSES

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

1. Automobile and travel allowance \$ _____
2. Other professional expenses \$ _____
3. Expenses for official meetings of the synod, as reimbursed
4. Continuing education (*\$1,000 recommended; minimum \$700 from calling source*) \$ _____
5. Other (_____) \$ _____
6. Pay the moving expenses to this field of service as follows: _____

D. AGREEMENT

1. Vacation time of _____ days per year, including _____ Sundays;
2. 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 lay person and congregation council*);
3. Participation in a First-Call Theological Education Program, where applicable;
4. Ongoing care through a Mutual Ministry Committee;
5. 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*; and
6. Maternity/Paternity or Adoptive leave of _____ weeks with full salary, housing, and benefits (Recommended 6 weeks; 4 weeks minimum).

* 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 this call.

A description of the particular responsibilities of this position may be attached to this "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities."

<or the following may be completed>

E. OTHER PROVISIONS

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

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

- (a) _____
- (b) _____
- (c) _____
- (d) _____
- (e) _____

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

- (a) _____
- (b) _____
- (c) _____
- (d) _____
- (e) _____

F. OTHER MATTERS

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

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: _____

NOTE: Retain original in records of the congregations. Make a copy for the pastor. As a matter of information, send a copy to the synod office. A description of the particular responsibilities of this position may be attached to this "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities."



Florida-Bahamas Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

2026 Rostered Minister Suggested Minimum Compensation Guidelines Narrative

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines provide a convenient way for congregations to determine, administer and evaluate appropriate compensation for rostered ministers. Appropriate compensation takes into account a lifelong ministry and looks to provide for the present needs of rostered ministers, as well as an adequate retirement.

It is helpful to remember that the method for determining compensation is a process that must be marked by openness, honesty, and graciousness. Both professional leaders and ministry representatives should be able to clearly articulate their needs at the beginning of a ministry together, and then, during the ministry journey, develop a regular ministry evaluation process to report and adjust for changes in the ministry context and needs. Compensation is meant to be a statement of the value the congregation places on the rostered minister's ministry and provides a reasonable standard of living within the community in which they are serving.

Professional expense reimbursement costs are also reviewed as part of this document. However, expenses are not considered part of the compensation and benefit package. Reimbursable expenses are those expenses that are required for the position. These expenses should be part of the Administrative Expenses of your financial plan.

However, carefully crafted guidelines do not give congregations automatic, concise, and simple answers to inherently complex issues. The following criteria should assist in identifying expectations and critical elements of the total compensation package.

As you use this document, please be encouraged to submit recommendations or suggestions to assist the Office of the Bishop in making this tool easier to use or understand.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS DEFINED

Direct Compensation

Baseline Compensation

Baseline Compensation is the minimum recommended amount prescribed for the position as determined by the job description. For example, a pastor must have a Master of Divinity

degree, the minimum baseline compensation begins with the amount set out for that degree status. Baseline Compensation includes the housing allowance.

If your ministry provides a parsonage, the minimum guideline should be divided by 1.3 to account for the value of the house provided. (IE: if the baseline compensation is \$ 61,012 and a parsonage is provided, the baseline compensation will be \$ 43,819. Calculated as \$ 61,012 / 1.3= \$ 46,932 rounded).

Housing Allowance

Word and Sacrament Ministers and Word and Service Ministers, called to congregational or specialized ministry, may designate a portion of their compensation as a “housing allowance.” This is a significant tax advantage, allowing clergy to exclude from federal taxable income that part of compensation used to provide a home.

Word and Sacrament Ministers and Word and Service Ministers are urged to consult a professional tax advisor to take full advantage of this provision in the tax code. Setting the housing allowance to cover actual expenses incurs no additional cost to the congregation or agency. To meet IRS requirements, the agency or Congregation Council **must vote to approve the amount decided upon by the clergy at a called meeting prior to the beginning of the calendar year.**

Total defined compensation adds base salary with any housing allowance, Social Security allowance, and furnishings and utility allowance. For plan members living in employer-provided housing, such as a parsonage, defined compensation is increased by 30% of salary and Social Security allowance. This allows Portico to provide appropriate contributions to the retirement account.

Equity Allowance

Where a congregation provides a parsonage, the congregation should assume costs for maintenance and utilities. The congregation may pay these costs directly or provide an allowance to cover the expenses. The congregation should provide and maintain major appliances in the parsonage.

While living in a parsonage has many advantages, it does not build home equity for retirement. The congregation is encouraged to provide a housing equity retirement contribution if a parsonage is provided. A housing equity retirement contribution is an additional retirement plan contribution some employers choose to make for their clergy. This money is more flexible than traditional retirement account contributions and has different withdrawal rules. In some situations, clergy can withdraw these contributions without penalties (if they move from a parsonage to a purchased home, for example).

It is recommended that the congregation fund this plan at 3% of the base salary. This can be done via the ELCA Portico Optional Pension Plan or other annuity vehicles.

Social Security Allowance

As self-employed persons, pastors will pay 15.30% of their salary and housing allowance for social security benefits (FICA). Many congregations provide an allowance for part of this expense. This allowance, if provided, is part of the taxable income for the pastor. Since congregations are required to pay 7.65% of a lay employee's salary for social security benefits, it would be appropriate to pay this amount as a social security allowance for the pastor.

Household Furnishings Allowance

When a parsonage is provided, the congregations may consider a Furnishings Allowance. This is an allowance equal to the rental value of the pastor's furnishings. This would help cover costs at the parsonage not otherwise reimbursed (i.e. minor repairs, personal furnishings, insurance, etc.)

Localized Cost of Living Adjustment

The Florida-Bahamas Synod is geographically large and diverse; consequently, not all areas have the same cost of living, including housing. The guidelines recommend that the congregational leadership and rostered leader review the cost of living in the community where the ministry serves as part of their decision-making process.

Benefits Package

ELCA Pension and Medical/Dental Benefits (Portico)

It is an expectation that the congregation will provide for the rostered minister's participation in the Pension and Other Benefits Plan of the ELCA. Portico Benefits Services administers the Pension and Other Benefits Plan of the ELCA.

The ELCA Pension and other benefit programs include the following components:

ELCA Health Benefits Plan — Health benefits include medical and mental health, dental, prescription drugs, support services, and wellness programs. The Synod recommendation is to provide the Gold+ Plan for each rostered minister. Each congregation may only designate one plan for all rostered ministers working for the same congregation. Should a higher cost plan be elected, the additional cost may be reduced from the base pay. Should a lower-cost or no plan be selected, 75% of the reduced cost may be added to the base pay. If no medical coverage is selected, verification of appropriate coverage elsewhere must be provided. If a waiver of coverage is no longer available, the leader must resume participation in the Portico Plan. (Adjustments to base pay must be carefully documented and re-adjusted if changed in the future. A separate budget line is recommended.)

ELCA Flexible Benefits Plan — Health flexible spending accounts (FSA), dependent (day) care accounts FSA, health savings accounts (HSA), limited-purpose flexible spending accounts (FSA), and personal wellness accounts, which can be used to pay for

eligible expenses. Each congregation should discuss the needs of the rostered minister and support participation, as appropriate and necessary, in each of the above plans. The rostered leader funds these accounts and allows the use of “pretax” earnings for the designated purposes. The use of these accounts does not increase the rostered minister’s total compensation.

ELCA Survivor Benefits Plan — Life insurance helps your family take care of financial obligations in the event of a death. Please refer to the percentage of the congregation’s premium allocated to that benefit.

ELCA Disability Benefits Plan — Provides eligible disabled members monthly income, ELCA Retirement Plan contributions, and health and survivor benefits. Please refer to the percentage of the congregation’s premium allocated to that benefit.

ELCA Retirement Plan — A defined contribution retirement plan assists the rostered leader toward living well in retirement. The Synod expectation is for congregations to fund each rostered minister’s retirement at a minimum rate of 12% of defined compensation.

In addition to the above elements of the Pension and other benefits, a contribution for “Retiree Support” is included each month in the payment to Portico Benefit Services. Please refer to the percentage of the congregation’s premium allocated to that benefit.

Stewardship of Time

Days off/Time Management

A full-time rostered minister is encouraged to take at least one full day off per week. A suggested normal week is 45 hours per week, recognizing that seasonal demands may require more or fewer hours in any given week. Additionally, it is recommended that rostered ministers take two consecutive days off at least once a month.

Vacation

The guideline of the Florida-Bahamas Synod regarding vacation for full-time and part-time rostered ministers is four weeks, including four Sundays for all rostered ministers whose position descriptions include expectations for regular Sunday responsibilities. It is recommended that a minimum of 2 weeks be taken contiguously per year for personal renewal.

In addition, congregations are encouraged to provide an additional 2 Sundays off (or Saturday and Sunday if worship occurs on both days each week each year to foster, support, and promote a more balanced personal and family life.

Vacation is normally to be taken during the fiscal year in which that vacation is budgeted. With the prior approval of the congregation, or congregation council, up to two weeks' vacation time may be carried over into the following year, thus allowing for an extended vacation time in that year. Absent prior approval by the congregation or congregation council, unused vacation time from a previous year is lost.

Because vacation time is accrued (earned based on the calendar/worked year, upon the ending of the call or employment, vacation that was not used should be paid in the last paycheck. Vacation time used above the accrued amount should be deducted from the final paycheck. Accrued vacation time will be 1/12 of the yearly vacation amount on the 1st of each month. (IE: January 1 – earned, .33 weeks / December 1 – earned 4 weeks. Approved carry-over vacation will also be paid.

Sabbatical/Extended Study Leave

Congregations and agencies are expected to offer a paid sabbatical/extended study leave for their rostered minister(s). The Bishop and our Florida-Bahamas Synod expect each full-time rostered minister to receive two months of paid sabbatical leave after each four years of service in the same ministry setting. Florida-Bahamas Synod policy is that sabbatical time should be devoted to rest, personal study and reflection, and (and/or) study that will benefit the ministry setting. It is recommended that the rostered minister and congregation collaborate in the planning and development of the sabbatical leave to maximize the value for both the rostered minister and congregation. The sabbatical leave in any fiscal or calendar year is to be considered a separate leave for specific sabbatical purposes, and all current benefits, including vacation, for the calendar/fiscal year in which the sabbatical is taken remain for that calendar/fiscal year.

It is recommended that the congregation establish a separate fund or account to draw from during the minister's sabbatical to cover additional costs of providing pastoral care and worship leadership.

Absences – Short Term, Illness/Accident

A policy should be established for short-term absences due to illness or accidents which prevent an individual from performing their normal work requirements. A suggested standard is one (1 day of paid sick leave earned for each full month worked. Once called, rostered ministers will be provided 6 earned days for short-term absences. Earned sick time may be accumulated, and a maximum of twenty-four (24 days may be carried over yearly.

For an illness/accident that exceeds earned short-term coverage, the Congregational Council may approve exceptions for pay and as appropriate, apply the provisions for disability coverage.

Parental Leave

A specific Parental Leave Plan should be developed by each congregation and discussed with the rostered leader(s) before call.

Parental leave is intended for a child's birth, adoption, or foster placement. Suppose there are multiple adoptions or foster care placements within a year. In that case, the rostered leader and congregation are encouraged to balance the needs of the family and the congregation to the extent possible.

When a rostered leader welcomes a child into their family, it is recommended that the congregation provide family leave of at least eight weeks for the parent, regardless of the gender of the parent. Such leave includes full salary, housing, and benefits.

Extended parental leave is directed toward illness or other special needs. Such leave should include up to two weeks of full salary and benefits. Any other specific conditions should be clearly defined in writing.

Parental Leave and Extended Parental Leave apply to full and part-time rostered leaders consistent with the level of their full and/or part-time benefits. For example, it is suggested that a part-time rostered leader be granted the same number of weeks of leave but at the pro-rated salary currently earned.

Disability

It is recommended that each congregation develop a written policy relating to disability. In case of a total disability, the congregation is expected to continue to pay full salary, housing, and benefit contributions for the first 60 days of disability. At this time, the disability benefits of the ELCA Portico Plan would go into effect. Any period of disability must be based on a written physician's recommendation.

The Congregation Council will approve absences due to less than a total disability or other medical reasons based upon a written physician's recommendation. The Congregation Council should consult with the Bishop's office for guidance.

Compassionate Leave

For full and part-time rostered ministers, it is recommended:

In the event of the death of a child, grandchild, spouse, or life partner –

At the sole discretion of the rostered leader, they may take up to one month of paid time off. The rostered leader may also take up to a second month of unpaid time off at their sole discretion.

In the event of the death of a parent, sibling, grandparent, mother/father-in-law, or legal guardian, at the sole discretion of the rostered leader, they may take up to two weeks of paid time off. The rostered leader may also take up to two additional weeks of unpaid time off at their sole discretion.

REIMBURSABLE BUSINESS EXPENSES

Automobile Mileage Reimbursement

The congregation/agency should reimburse miles traveled in carrying out duties as a rostered minister at the rate allowed by the IRS. Check IRS guidelines: Continuing Education Expenses and Incentive.

Continuing Education

A minimum of 50 contact hours per year of continuing education is required of every rostered minister of the ELCA. The ELCA expects persons within their first three years in ministry to attend the required First Call Theological Education (FCTE) programs. A contact hour is a typical 50-minute class or the equivalent.

Continuing education may be courses, seminary classes, or workshops. It is recommended that rostered ministers and congregational leadership develop a professional development plan that is part of the yearly review process of leadership goals and expectations, with 2 weeks of professional development/continuing education as the objective.

The continuing education plan should include an appropriate budget to assist the rostered minister with expenditures (verified by receipts). A minimum budget of \$1,000 is suggested for all rostered ministers. It is recommended that this continuing education budget be increased by \$500 for additional expenses incurred by a First Call rostered minister for required training.

Continuing Education Incentive - completing continuing education in a previous year should be given consideration when determining the compensation for a rostered minister for the upcoming year. The guidelines recommend an additional salary adjustment of \$750 for every 25 hours of continuing education taken during the year, up to a maximum of \$1,500 or 50 hours, unless otherwise pre-approved by congregation leadership. This continuing education adjustment is NOT automatic and is not intended to carry over from year to year unless the rostered minister participates in continuing education each year.

Periodicals/Books

The congregation/ agency is encouraged to provide reimbursement for the purchase of or subscriptions to books and periodicals, enabling the rostered minister to keep abreast of developments in theology and the ministry profession. A suggested budgeted amount is \$300, with expenditures verified by receipts.

Cell Phone

The congregation/ agency is encouraged to provide reimbursement for the monthly costs of service for a cell phone, enabling the rostered minister to maintain current communications. Suggested reimbursement: Personal/Ministry – 50%; Ministry use only – 100%, with expenditures verified by receipts.

Student Debt Relief

Recognizing that rostered ministers incur considerable debt to attend seminary, the Synod encourages congregations to assist in easing this burden. Congregations should consider budgeting a specified amount to contribute toward student debt relief.

Other Professional Expenses

The congregation should budget for other professional expenses incurred in performing duties of the rostered minister with a suggested amount of \$200. All expenses associated with required attendance at Synod Assembly, Conference meetings and the annual Conference on Ministry should be budgeted, and expenditures verified by receipts.

OTHER FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Congregational Financial Plan

Please see Section 8-G-1 of our Florida-Bahamas Synod Transition Manual, which follows these definitions.

Pastoral Care Supply

Occasionally, and during a sabbatical, a congregation may be required to seek out a pastor to serve in care and/or preaching. The following are some guidelines. All terms and compensation are to be negotiated between the supply pastor and the appropriate congregational leadership.

Preaching:

One service -- \$225 or higher

For each additional service, the compensation should be \$50/ additional service. Reasonable hotel and meal costs.

Mileage reimbursement at the current IRS rate per mile. Check the IRS for current rates.

<https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>

Resource C

Notes in Preparation for a Congregation Meeting to Call a Pastor

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 at 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.

Outline for Congregation Meeting to Call a Pastor

- Call the meeting to order.
- Announce that the only business to be conducted at this meeting is one vote to call Rev. _____.
- 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.
- Introduce the representative of the Office of the Bishop. Invite the representative to make a brief statement and open the meeting with prayer.
- 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.
- 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.
- Announce the vote tally and declare the results of the voting.
- 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 Office of the Bishop. They will then be signed and sent back to the Pastor. The Pastor has thirty days to respond.
- 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.
- All business now being completed, adjourn the meeting with prayer.

Resource D
Sample Letter – Release of a Candidate

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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Resource E

Sample Letter Informing Pastor of Call

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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