Pastoral Transition:

A Call to Mission for the Congregation

New England Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Revised July 2014

Call Process Overview

Meet with Bishop's Associate

- Overview of Call Process
- Contact/Interim Pastor Discussion

Congregational Assessment

- CAT Assessment Tool
- Minisry Site Profile (MSP) completed by congregation

Profile Review and Orientation

- Completed MSP reviewed with Congregation Council and Bishop's Assocaite
- Ministry Site Profile becomes public
- Call Committee orientation

Candidates

- 1-3 Candidates interviewed
- Bishop's Associate is present for last interview with primary candidate

Ministry Setting Visit

- Call Committee worships at candidate(s) current parish or a mutually-agreed upon neutral site

Call Committee Votes

- 2/3 majority by Call Committee required to recommend Candidate to Congregation Council

Council Interviews and Votes on Candidate

- Compensation package defined
- Candidate recommendation by Council requires vote of majority plus one
- Notification per Constitution guidelines is made to the congregation for call vote

Call Vote Weekend

- Candidate and family may meet informally with congregation the day prior to the call vote
- Candidate preaches and leads worship
- Congregational Meeting led by Synod representative
- Candidate needs 2/3 majority vote by written ballot to be called
- Congregation also votes on compensation package with a simple majority to pass
- Candidate has 30 days to respond to offer from date of call vote

Introduction

An effective succession plan includes these components: a transition phase, a search or call phase, and a start-up phase. The following pages outline the New England Synod's approach to the transition process. Much of what is found in these pages comes from the work of several sources including the Synod's *Healthy Transitions* resource, The Interim Pastor's Network, and Dr. J. Russell Crabtree. We commend his work in this area, particularly his book *Owl Sight: Evidence-Based Discernment and the Promise of Organizational Intelligence for Ministry*.

The Transition Phase outlines how the leadership team will manage the period of time from the resignation announcement of the pastor to the arrival of the next pastor.

The Call process Phase specifies the responsibilities of the call process as it relates specifically to the interviewing and engagement with candidates for the position of pastor.

The Start-up Phase outlines expectations for the first six to twelve months of the newly arrived pastor.

Let's get started

What follows is a timeline or checklist of the entire process.

You will then find the same process outlined in detail with descriptions of each event on page 7.

The Transition Phase

- Meet with an Associate to the Bishop for an orientation to the Pastoral Transition Process
  This meeting should be scheduled as soon as possible following the announcement from your pastor that he/she is leaving, or in the event of a planned upcoming transition. This meeting would typically be with your Congregation Council.

- Establish a Transition Team
  The Transition Team is responsible for the Transition Phase of the process. It consists of 6-8 members with the following skills: organization, strong communication, varied networking connections, positive outlook, creativity, and strategic thinking. It also includes at least one member of the Congregation Council.

- Form an MSP (Ministry Site Profile) Team and integrate them with your Transition Team
  The MSP Team is responsible for writing your congregational profile. Therefore this team should have people who have strong writing skills, as well as knowledge of working with computers and the internet.

- Conduct a *History of Our Church Sunday*

- Conduct the CAT (Church Assessment Tool)

- Review the results of the CAT with a trained interpreter from the New England Synod during a gathering of both the Council and the Transition Team

- Give a summary report to the congregation on the results of the CAT

- Define and Research the Demographics of your community

- Conduct a Community Needs Assessment

- Conduct a "Play it Forward" Sunday

- Release the Draft version of the MSP on a Sunday, and seek feedback from the congregation. Also begin to collect suggestions for questions the Call Committee might ask a potential candidate based on the MSP.

Ministry Site Profile (MSP):

The MSP is a tool that all ELCA congregations use to help match them with a pastor whose gifts are a good fit for their current missional needs and priorities.

Pastors complete a Rostered Leader Profile (RLP) which, together with the MSP, guides Synod staff in bringing the right pastor and congregation together.

The Call Process Phase

- Appoint a Call Committee

- After input from the congregation, meet with the Associate to the Bishop, Congregation Council, Transition Team, and Call Committee to review the MSP

- The Call Committee meets with the Associate to the Bishop to begin the search process. This typically occurs immediately following the meeting described above (i.e. on the same night/day).

- On the Sunday following the meeting with the Associate to the Bishop, the Council President or designee announces the beginning of the call process, and explains the need for confidentiality while the Call Committee begins its work.

- The Call Committee establishes a list of questions for potential candidates, plans the process, and determines the location they will use to conduct the interview while awaiting profiles from the candidate(s).

- On a weekly basis the work of the Call Committee is lifted up in the prayers of the people during worship

- Once every three weeks, the chair of the Call Committee announces to the congregation a brief update on the process to date

- Once a candidate is chosen by the Call Committee, a report is shared by the Call Committee with the Council

- The Finance Committee of the Council prepares a compensation package and sends it to the Associate to the Bishop for review
  It is important to consult closely with the candidate so that clarity and transparency are included in the discussions. This is also vital as there are tax implications to clergy compensation that are unique.

- The Council meets with the candidate to discuss compensation, start date, moving concerns, and other details related to call

- A congregational meeting date is determined with the congregation, candidate, and the Associate to the Bishop who will preside over the call vote.

The Start-Up Phase

- After the call has been voted upon by the congregation, the Start-Up Team begins its work, though planning may begin prior to this date.

- The Start-Up Team begins inviting the congregation to help with a *Welcome to our New Pastor* guidebook.

  This booklet may include well wishes and prayers written by members of the congregation, suggested best restaurants, doctors, dentists, etc.

- The Start-Up Team plans a welcome party for the new pastor, possibly for his/her first Sunday or another convenient day.

- The Call Committee continues to meet and serve as a support team for the new pastor for the first six months.

  They are encouraged to meet once a month with the new pastor for this time period.
  This is to be a supportive committee assisting the pastor as he or she settles in to the congregation and community.

- In consultation with the Conference Dean, an Installation service should be planned for the Pastor and Congregation.

  This typically takes place during the first three months. Make sure that both the Associate to the Bishop as well as the Bishop are invited to participate. Invitations should sent out to area congregations well in advance of this event.

- At the three month mark, invite the New England Synod Listening team to conduct a one day workshop for the Council, staff, pastor and lay leadership.

  This workshop is called *New Beginnings: Starting Off Ministry Together, Working Through Differences*

- The Associate to the Bishop meets with the newly called pastor, the Call Committee and the Council at the six month mark. A list of goals and objectives for the next six months is outlined.

The Pastoral Transition Process in Full

The Transition Plan

Meet with an Associate to the Bishop for an orientation to the Pastoral Transition Process

This should be scheduled as soon as possible following the announcement from your pastor that he/she is leaving, or in the event of a planned upcoming transition. This meeting would typically be with the Congregation Council.

Establish a Transition Team

The Transition Team, who is responsible for the Transition Plan, is composed of 6-8 members with the following skills: organization, strong communication, varied networking connections, positive outlook, creativity, and strategic thinking. It includes at least one member of the Council.

Form an MSP (Ministry Site Profile) Team and integrate them with your Transition Team

The MSP Team is responsible for writing your congregational profile. Therefore this team should have people who have strong writing skills, as well as knowledge of working with computers and the internet.

The Ministry Site Profile

The first step in the process is the creation of the congregation's Ministry Site Profile. A Ministry Site Profile Committee of five persons shall be formed consisting of two or three members of the Council and other qualified members of the congregation. These members should be persons who have the time and ability to compile an accurate portrait of the congregation.

A chair shall be elected from the group, normally one of the council members in order to provide good communication with the council. The chair shall secure a copy of the Ministry Site Profile (MSP) form, available through the ELCA website, at http://www.elca.org/en/Call-Process and convene the committee.

The importance of congregational input

Although parts of the MSP can be assigned to individual members of the committee, it is important that there are times when the whole committee reviews and discusses the entire profile. Data should be collected with as much congregational input as possible, through small group discussions, surveys, or other ways to get feedback from members. It is best if the answers are concise, but it is important that they have been given thoughtful consideration and expressed in a comprehensive manner. Remember that this document is what the candidates will read as they decide whether or not to proceed in the call process with the congregation.

The final report should be submitted to the entire council for its review and possible revision and also be made available to members of the Call Committee. After the profile has been approved by the congregation council, a copy shall be sent to the bishop's representative, and a date set for that representative to meet with the council and Call Committee to review the completed mission profile, discuss the hopes and vision of the congregation and answer any remaining questions about the process. The interim/transitional/contact pastor should not attend this meeting.

Once the profile is mutually agreed on, it should be posted to the ELCA database following the instructions on the form.

Conduct a *History of our Church* Sunday

Invite the congregation to a History Event following Sunday morning worship. Plan for a two-hour event. Invite everyone, provide drinks, food, and a comfortable space to gather.

What you'll need:

- Hospitality: Food and Drinks
- Cups, Plates, Napkins, Utensils
- Tables, preferably round tables, marked by decade, with three sheets of large poster paper at each table.
- Large Poster Board (Post-it works really well)
- Markers, dark bold colors

Welcome and devotions (10 minutes)

Sample:

Today we explore who we've been to better understand who we want to be and need to be. We'll explore each decade from the perspective of the people who joined the congregation during that time. This is not an exercise in details or facts. It is an exercise in perspective and remembrance.

Explanation

Sample:

Please help yourself to the meal, when you return you'll find that each table will have three sheets of paper there will be more information about these later, each table will explore a decade of time.

Sit at the table marked by the decade when you joined the congregation. Please note, you sit at the table marked with the period of time when you JOINED not when you were born. If you are a child or a youth please sit at the table marked by the time when your first memories begin.

Appoint a recorder to write and a reporter to share your findings as you begin.

Discovering the Decades

- On the first sheet of paper as a group list: *What was happening in the WORLD of significance?*
- On the second sheet of paper, as a group, list: What was happening in *RELIGION*?
- On the third Sheet of paper, as a group, list: What was happening with THIS CONGREGATION?
- On this particular question consider building dates, struggles, new leadership, neighborhood connections—all aspects of your story.

Sharing the Story

- Post each of the decades results around the room
- Share each of the decades with the whole group
- Questions to think about:
  - Are there any big events missing?
  - What are common themes?
  - What strikes you?
  - Do you see any particular impact of leadership?
  - What influence did personalities have on the community?
  - What impact did the community needs or culture have congregation?
  - What impact did the congregation have on the community?
  - What role has the congregation taken for community and for individuals?

Introduce the CAT (Church Assessment Tool)

Sample:

Our history tells us a lot about ourselves. However, it is still viewed through story and perspective, influenced by hindsight, and missing voices of the past. Our congregation has an opportunity to gain insight into where we stand as a congregation today using the CAT (Church Assessment Tool). It's an assessment that moves from stories and perspectives as a decision making tool to using organizational intelligence gathered from a wide variety of individuals. We're asking that as many participants as possible complete this assessment. Please help us encourage as many people as possible take this assessment in the next two weeks. (For the following two Sundays provide computers and information about the assessment so that you can get full participation)

Close with thanks for their participation and prayer

Conduct the CAT (Church Assessment Tool)

The Church Assessment Tool, or CAT for short, is a congregation-wide assessment that provides an in-depth look at the experiences, perceptions and aspirations of a congregation. The New England Synod has entered into a partnership with Holy Cow Consulting for the training and implementation of this tool. The CAT assessment will provide a meaningful picture of your congregation. The CAT is a customizable assessment instrument that can help your congregation:

- Measure the level of satisfaction and energy in the church.
- Identify the critical success factors for improving organizational climate.
- Discover where members would like to go in the future.
- Gauge readiness for change.
- Uncover potential resources you may be missing
- Prepare for a search for your next pastor

You can learn more about the Church Assessment tool at www.holycowconsulting.com/CAT

We have found the CAT to be among the finest tools available for assessing a congregation in the present, and preparing your church for your next pastor.

There is a cost to the congregation for the CAT, which is paid directly to Holy Cow Consulting. The cost is based on your average Sunday worship attendance. As of this publication, most of our congregations in the NES will pay a fee of $415 for the Assessment. (Very small congregations have an option of a small church equivalent called Conversations. The cost of this tool is considerably less. Please check with the Bishop's Associate that serves your congregation.)

The fee includes the design, customization, implementation and report. The Synod provides, at no charge (as part of your congregation's Mission Support) a trained interpreter who will meet with your Council, Transition Team, and Call Committee.

Review the results of the CAT with a trained interpreter from the Synod during a gathering of both the Council and the Transition Team

The interpretation provides a thorough examination of the results of your assessment. It also supports your team, which is preparing the Ministry Site Profile, as well as providing invaluable perspective to your Call Committee as they seek your next pastor.

The Associate to the Bishop for your congregation can provide you with more information about the CAT, as well as references from other congregations that have used it here in New England and elsewhere.

Give a summary report to the congregation on the results of the CAT

Define and Research the Demographics of your community

There are numerous sources available to conduct this research. The ELCA provides the following resources, again at no charge to you and included in your congregation's Mission Support. This tool is designed to help ELCA congregations gain a general understanding of their community and to plan mission using that information.

The website link is: www.elca.org/research

There is a box "**Demographic Reports**" on the lower right side margin. Click on "**View Now**."

You will need the synod code, which is **7B** and your **congregational ID number**. This number can be obtained by finding your congregation's parochial report (Form A) in your church files.
If you still cannot find it, call the New England Synod Office and ask for assistance.

Conduct a Community Needs Assessment

Two members of the Transition Team or the Council make two separate appointments with two local town officials. In our experience, two of the following persons are best: a local school principal, a local chief of police, a local town mayor or selectman/selectwoman, the leader of the local chamber of commerce.

You call to ask for an appointment because you are from a local church and as you are in the process of searching for a new pastor you want to learn about the greatest needs in your community. You'd like 15 minutes of the person's time.

Two of you go to the meeting, and at least one of you takes notes. During the conversation you ask the following questions:

- In your experience what do you see as the top two or three problems in our community?
- Who do you see working on those issues?
- Do you have any concerns about our community as you look into the future, and if so, what are they?
- What could our church do to help improve the quality of life in our community?
- When we call a new pastor to our church, could we bring them in to meet you?

Immediately following the conversation do the following:

- Write and mail a handwritten note thanking the official for his/her time and input.
- Write up your notes of the conversation and review them with your partner so that you can evaluate if you both heard the same information.
- After you have conducted both conversations, provide a verbal update to the congregation on the following Sunday, and make your written notes available to the congregation, and especially the MSP team.

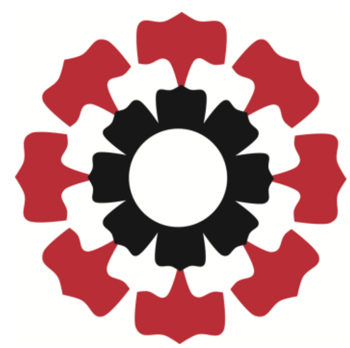
In our experience, every congregation that has engaged in this kind of Community Needs Assessment, reports that it is one of the most eye-opening experiences. The rewards of this exercise cannot be adequately expressed.

Conduct a "Play It Forward" Sunday

Invite the congregation to a "Play It Forward" event following Sunday morning worship. Plan for a two-hour event. Invite everyone, provide drinks, food, and a comfortable space to gather.

What you'll need:

- Hospitality: Food and Drinks
- Cups, Plates, Napkins, Utensils
- Tables and chairs
- Large open wall space
- Large pieces of paper with choices listed
- Markers, dark bold colors
- Half-sheet pieces of paper
- Pens for everyone
- Post-it flags



Welcome, Meal, and Devotions (10 minutes)

Sample:

Today we'll begin to "Play it forward". We'll think about what kind of congregation we are today and we'll dream about what we want in the future.

In each exercise we encourage you to consider what you've learned about our congregation from the CAT assessment

Share in devotions.

Forced Choice Exercise

Modeling page 5 of the MSP, take 12 large sheets of paper with a horizontal line across the middle. On either end of each line list the choices below:

We tend to be formal and programmatic	vs.	We tend to be informal and spontaneous
We have clearly defined goals and plans for our future		We have no stated goals or plans
We are racially and economically diverse		We are demographically homogeneous
We welcome ideas that are provoking and challenging		We prefer ideas that are tried and true
We rely on our leaders for direction		We rely on group decision-making
We have learned how to use conflict constructively		We tend to perceive conflict as something destructive
Our facilities are often used by community groups		Our facilities are only used for our activities
We train people to minister outside our walls		We train people to minister inside our walls
We focus on ideas and beliefs		We focus on skills and action
We are obviously Lutheran in identity and practice		We are less obvious about our Lutheran heritage
We participate in synod and ELCA activities		We are not very active in the synod and ELCA
We focus on Biblical studies and doctrine		We focus on contemporary issues and topics

Giving each person a marker, have them make a mark on the line closer to the side they believe most accurately reflects the congregation. At the completion of the exercise, review any surprises or affirmation of expectations, save the sheets for those who are completing the MSP.

With God All Things Are Possible

- Give each individual a half sheet of paper with the words: *If, this congregation truly believes that with God, all things were possible, in the next three years I would see…*
- Have each person write an answer then post their answers on a wall, share their vision with everyone gathered
- Give everyone five "post it flags," instructing them that they are to choose their top five priorities or preferences.
- Tally the responses and review the top five priorities that have emerged
- Reflect on these questions:
    - How do the priorities fit with critical success factors?
    - How do the priorities fit with the community needs assessment?
    - What kind of opportunities do these provide?
    - What are the threats to making these happen?

Wrap-Up

- Explain that the MSP team will create the profile based on the information gathered
- Name date of MSP draft review with congregation
- Thank everyone for their time. Close with Prayer.

Release the Draft version of the MSP on a Sunday, and seek feedback from the congregation.

Also begin to collect suggestions for questions that Call Committee might ask a potential candidate based on the MSP.

The MSP team has been meeting throughout the Transition phase, and has spent time filling out the MSP form. As this phase is coming to a close they should be nearing completion of the MSP. Sometime after the "Play it Forward Event" the team releases a first draft copy of the MSP to the entire congregation, and asks for feedback. Give the congregation one week to respond with their suggestions, thoughts, or reflections.

After one week of input, the MSP team can make revisions to the document. It is most helpful that you contact your Associate to the Bishop at this time so that plans can be made for further review of the MSP and movement to the next phase of the Transition.

The Call Process Phase

Appoint a Call Committee

The Work of the Call Committee

It is not uncommon for members of the congregation to offer their services as members of the Call Committee. However, due to the tremendous responsibility entrusted to this group, it is recommended that the Call Committee should be appointed by the Congregation Council.

If the congregation's constitution requires congregational election of the Call Committee members, nominations should be made by the Council. It is recommended that the chair of the committee be a member of the Council.

The Call Committee shall be composed of six regular members and, if desired, one alternate, the majority of whom do not currently serve on the congregation council. The composition of the Call Committee should intentionally reflect the make-up of the congregation, assuring that all the different categories of age, gender, ethnic group, and differing lengths of membership in the congregation are represented. It is good to consider a youth or young adult (age 16-30) for this committee, assuming they will be able to attend the meetings. It is recommended that members of the same family not serve on the Call Committee. Committee members should not be paid employees of the congregation or their family members.

The Council should appoint persons carefully, asking itself these questions about potential members of the committee:

- Is this person firmly grounded in a relationship with Jesus Christ and committed to the search process as a prayerful journey under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?
- Does this person have the respect and trust of members of the congregation?
- Is this person able to respect confidentiality?
- Is this person open to future mission possibilities for the congregation and not simply eager to maintain the *status quo*?
- Is this person able to listen to others' opinions, and participate in an open and respectful discussion with other members of the committee?
- Is this person a confirmed and communing member of the congregation who attends worship regularly and participates in the life of the community of faith?
- Will this person be able to attend all meetings and interviews and be able to attend worship in another setting to experience the candidate's worship leadership?

In addition, we ask that one additional non-voting member be added to the Call Committee. This should be a person from your community that does not attend a church. In other words, they have no religious affiliation. We now live in a time when in our region 75% of the population does not attend a church or synagogue. We feel it is important that the Call Committee as well as the candidates hears this perspective.

An ideal non-church going person for the Call Committee would have these characteristics:

- They live in the community where the church building is located
- Although not participants in another church, they are not hostile or angry to religion in general.
- They have a desire to make the community where they live a better place to live.

Preparation

The Call Committee works in partnership with the Office of the Bishop through the call process. The chair of this committee will be in regular communication with the Bishop's representative and will be the primary contact during the initial stages of the call process.

The first responsibility of the chair shall be to arrange a time for orientation of the committee. This orientation, which will prepare the committee to receive names of candidates, can take place at any time after the Ministry Site Profile (MSP) has been submitted, and before the first interview with a candidate. Immediately following the joint meeting of the Council, Call Committee, and MSP team is an ideal time for this meeting to take place. The Bishop's representative will meet with the Call Committee to provide the orientation and answer questions about the process. If requested, a neighboring or retired pastor may be able to participate in a mock interview.

Once this meeting has taken place, the congregation is ready to receive the name(s) of candidate(s). The Call Committee should begin preparing themselves to interview the candidate(s). Potential questions could be requested of the congregation. While all these questions need not be used, they give the congregation a chance to assume more ownership of the process: a process which, of necessity, will become less public.

After input from the congregation, meet with the Associate to the Bishop, church council, transition team and Call Committee to review the MSP.

Choosing the Number of Candidates to Interview

When the Council and Call Committee meet with the Bishop's representative to review the completed MSP, the Council will decide, with input from the Call Committee, the number of candidates to be interviewed. Two options are available:

OPTION ONE: One candidate's name is given to the Call Committee by the Office of the Bishop. The Call Committee follows the interview process outlined below.

OPTION TWO: The Call Committee is given the names and Rostered Leader Profiles (RLP) of two or three candidates recommended by the Office of the Bishop.

Note: The total number of candidates given to the Call Committee is determined by several factors which include the availability of candidates, proper match of candidates to the congregation along with other factors.

The Call Committee interviews all of the candidates within six weeks of receiving the names. The purpose of this six week time frame is to insure that the Call Committee proceeds in an efficient manner. This also allows the candidates flexibility as they are now able to be in multiple call processes at the same time.

The interview process includes a time for questions and answers as described below, as well as an experience of the candidates' worship leadership. This may be done in a small evening Eucharist for the members of the Call Committee on the same day as the interview. Once the Call Committee has decided on one candidate, the other two candidates are notified, and the recommended candidate's name is forwarded on to the Council.

In both options, the Call Committee must remember the need for confidentiality. In processes involving multiple candidates, the candidates do not know each other's identities.

To congregations seeking to interview "first call" candidates (those just graduating from seminary open to their first call in a congregation), only one name will be given. This decision has been made for several reasons, including a limited number of first call candidates, and the expectation of the ELCA churchwide organization that first call candidates will not be assigned to a Synod without a reasonable expectation of call. In addition, it is our experience that forcing first call candidates into a comparative process is not helpful to the long-term ministry of the whole church.

There may be times when circumstances do not allow for multiple candidates. This could be due to the timing of the call process, a limited number of appropriate candidates for call, and situations requiring special attention. This determination will be made by the Bishop in consultation with the congregation's leadership.

The Call Committee meets with the Associate to the Bishop to begin the search process

Receiving a Candidate

The Call Committee chair will be sent the name(s) and Rostered Leader Profile(s) (RLP) of the candidate(s) recommended by the Bishop and staff. The Bishop and staff spend a great deal of time communicating with pastors within this synod who seek a change of call, interviewing potential candidates for the Synod (or, occasionally, contacting one who might be open to considering a new call), and communicating with persons across the country to discover excellent candidates. There is also time spent in prayer, reflection and staff discussion to determine a good match between candidate(s) and congregation(s).

Names of candidates can arise and be considered by the Bishop and the Synod pastoral staff from various sources. Any member of the congregation may suggest the name of a pastor to be considered as a candidate. The chair of the Call Committee shall submit to the Bishop any names that arise in this fashion and are considered by the Call Committee to be reasonable suggestions.

If the pastor is rostered in another synod, the Bishop of that synod must be consulted by the Bishop of the New England Synod before the pastor can be approached. The Bishop and staff take these suggestions seriously and pursue each one to determine if that pastor is an appropriate candidate for the congregation.

Once the staff has agreed that a candidate has the gifts and skills needed, that candidate is sent the congregation's Ministry Site Profile. After a pastor has given consent to be nominated the Bishop will propose that person for the consideration of the Call Committee.

Upon receipt of the candidate's Rostered Leader Profile, the Call Committee chair shall carefully distribute the profile to the rest of the committee, keeping in mind the importance of confidentiality.

On the Sunday following the meeting with the Associate to the Bishop, the Council President or designee announces the beginning of the call process, and explains the need for confidentiality while the Call Committee begins its work

Information: What to share, what not to share

The call process must observe a high degree of confidentiality. There are two reasons for this. One is to protect the candidate, whose congregation may not know that she/he is considering a call to another congregation.

Members of the Call Committee and Council are requested to take care that the candidate's documents are kept secure and to discuss information only with those who are involved in the present stage of the process. Difficult as it may seem, not even spouses should be informed of the details of the process. Also, friends and relatives who live far away should not be given confidential information. True stories abound of confidential information that traveled across the country and back again to trouble the congregation of an unsuspecting candidate.

The second important reason for confidentiality is to protect the process. If the name should become known throughout the congregation, modern communication technology allows people to find out about the candidate's background in ways that were not possible before. This could also allow members of the congregation to second-guess or try to influence the Call Committee decision, and in that way jeopardize the mutual trust necessary to this process.

Communication in the Congregation

While highly confidential, the call process is not to be perceived as secretive. To this end, regular communication with the congregation is essential. Newsletter updates, announcements at worship, judicious use of the congregation's website, the posting of a chart noting the congregation's progress through the steps in the process will all help the congregation know how the process is proceeding. All such notices need to focus only on the process, with no mention of anything that could identify the candidate.

The Call Committee establishes a list of questions, plans the process, and determines the location they will use to conduct the interview while awaiting profile(s) of the candidate(s)

On a weekly basis the work of the Call Committee is lifted up in the prayers of the people during Sunday worship

Samples (feel free to compose your own):

Gracious God, we give thanks for those who have been appointed to serve on the call committee and entrusted with the work of discerning a new pastor to guide this congregation. Grant to these men and women wisdom, patience, and the direction of your Holy Spirit, that they may exercise right judgment, and so serve you and the mission of your people here.
Lord in your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

or

God of wisdom, in your goodness you continue to raise up faithful shepherds to serve your Church. Direct the members of our call committee as they seek to discern, on our behalf, a new leader to guide us in our mission in this place, that we may move forward together in mission.

Once every three weeks, the chair of the call committee announces to the congregation a brief update on the process to date.

Interviewing the Candidate: A two-step process

Conversation with the Candidate

It is equally important to stay in regular conversation with the candidate. Members of the Call Committee and Council should remember that this is a time of nervousness and anxiety for the candidate as well as the congregation. Both sides should take responsibility for ongoing communication, and should be sensitive to the needs of the other. If the planning of meetings or the communication of decisions is not shared promptly, there will be unnecessary anxiety and unpleasant feelings about the process.

Upon receipt of the candidate's Rostered Leader Profile (RLP), the call chair should contact the candidate to make arrangements for the interview. The congregation is responsible for covering expenses incurred by a candidate traveling for an interview with the committee, and any subsequent visits at the invitation of the congregation. The congregation's budget should also include all the costs incurred by the Call Committee, such as phone, travel, meals, duplicating, and postage.

Once the Call Committee receives a name, two activities with the candidate constitute the interview process. The first is a meeting between the candidate and the call committee. Normally, this initial visit will not include the candidate's spouse (if married). The spouse is encouraged to visit when the candidate meets with the Council.

First, the candidate meets with the entire Call Committee. This meeting provides the first opportunity for conversation with the candidate, and normally will take place at the church. The representative of the office of the Bishop will accompany the candidate to this meeting, if possible.

The reason that the Bishop's representative will attend is two-fold. First, the Bishop's representative can observe the interaction and responses between the candidate and committee in order to be able to provide feedback on the interview. This feedback is especially helpful if a decision is reached by one side or the other to withdraw from the process. Second, it is a time when the Bishop's representative can get to know the candidate and members of the committee better, and lay the foundation for a good partnership in ministry with the Synod for the future.

The Call Committee is free to meet with the candidate on subsequent occasions when the Bishop's representative is not present. Once the committee and candidate have met personally, a second meeting could be conducted by telephone or Skype, although in-person is ideal. Members of the Call Committee may not visit the candidate's present congregation without the candidate's permission.

It is suggested that the candidate meet earlier with the chair of the committee, possibly including a meal, and spend time touring the church, parsonage (if one is provided by the congregation), and community. If there is no walkthrough of the parsonage at this time, provisions should be made for a tour prior to the interview with the Congregation Council. This is a good time to review the aspects of the community that are likely to be factors in the candidate's decision: housing, schools, shopping facilities, medical resources, employment possibilities for the spouse, recreation facilities, parks, etc. The candidate shall be reimbursed by the congregation for the expenses of this and any subsequent visits.

The second activity of the interview process is a visit to observe the candidate preach and lead worship. Arrangements will be made in mutual consultation, and should take place as soon as possible after the initial interview. Normally, the Call Committee should try to observe the candidate in his or her own congregational setting. However, it is also possible to choose a neutral site, especially if the candidate has come from a significant distance, or is not yet ordained. At this stage, the candidate does not preach at the congregation in which a call is being considered.

Following the two parts of the interview process, the committee should share the role of contacting the candidate's references. This allows the committee members to ask any specific questions that may have come up during the interview.

Recommending the Candidate

After prayerful deliberation, the Call Committee shall determine whether or not to recommend the candidate for consideration by the Congregation Council. In many cases, the committee will reach consensus that the person should be recommended to the congregation to be the new pastor. If the committee cannot reach a unanimous decision, then a two-thirds affirmative vote will be sufficient to recommend the candidate to the Council. The chair of the Call Committee shall inform the Bishop's representative of the decision and request a special meeting of the Congregation Council in order to present the candidate.

Not Recommending the Candidate

If the Call Committee decides not to continue working with the candidate, the chair shall inform the candidate in writing immediately of the decision, providing some reason and relevant feedback to the candidate, and send a copy of the letter to the Bishop's representative. Although it is difficult to write such a letter, it is important information for the candidate and helpful guidance for the office of the bishop in determining the qualities of the next candidate. The Office of the Bishop will be fully supportive of a Call Committee that has faithfully considered a candidate, participated in both steps of the interview process, and then decided not to continue with that person. The Bishop and staff shall provide the name of another candidate as soon as possible after being informed of the committee's decision.

If the candidate does not sense a call to the congregation after initial steps, she/he shall likewise inform the Call Committee chairperson, as well as the Bishop's representative, outlining the reasons for the withdrawal.

Once a candidate is chosen by the Call Committee, a report is shared committee with the Council.

The Work of the Congregational Council

The chair of the Call Committee shall communicate with the chief lay leader to arrange a meeting with the Congregation Council for the purpose of presenting the recommendation of the Call Committee. There should be a written recommendation prepared by the Call Committee giving the committee's rationale for the decision and outlining the qualities of the pastor that are particularly outstanding and important to the leadership of the congregation. The chief lay leader shall preside. The pastor serving during the transition does not attend this meeting. Members of the Call Committee may be invited to attend.

From this point in the process, the communication with the candidate will be conducted by the chief lay leader. It will be important for the Council to observe the same guidelines for confidentiality and timely communication that have been observed by the call committee.

Candidate's compensation package

Prior to meeting with the candidate, the Congregation Council — in conjunction with the financial officers of the congregation and in consultation with the Compensation Guidelines adopted by the Synod Assembly — shall develop a suggested compensation package to be sent to the candidate and to the Council. A helpful form used in this process is *Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities* found in the *Healthy Transitions* resource.

A copy of the form also is sent to the representative of the Office of the Bishop prior to being shared with the candidate. If there are any concerns regarding compensation, these should be addressed during the meeting with the Council. The Bishop's representative is available for consultation, and will suggest adjustments to the compensation package if needed.

Candidate's spouse and family

If the candidate has a spouse, that person might be included in a visit to the area at this time, but will not participate in the initial meeting with the Council. The spouse is not being considered for call, and members of the committee and Council are advised against having any particular expectations of the spouse in relation to the congregation. However, the spouse is highly regarded as the pastor's partner in life, and it is appropriate to ask questions related to the needs and role of that person in the life of the community of faith.

If the congregation owns a parsonage, the Council and candidate should discuss its upkeep, plans for any remodeling or redecorating, and any other concerns about it.

A time of social interaction may be planned with the candidate and Council, and the spouse and family could be introduced to the Council at this time. Plans should be made for the comfort of the spouse and family during the meeting of the candidate with the Council.

The Council Meeting

The role of the Congregation Council at this point in the process is to receive and assume the recommendation of the Call Committee, trusting that the Call Committee is satisfied that the candidate's theology, practice of ministry, worship leadership, and preaching will provide the leadership the congregation needs.

The Council builds upon the Call Committee's recommendation by seeking to discern if there is any reason that recommendation should not proceed to the congregation. This involves discussions of the mission of the congregation, compensation, living arrangements, starting date, and other practical considerations. The back page of the *Definition of Compensation* document from the ELCA provides the starting point for this conversation.

After the Council and candidate have had a sufficient opportunity to get to know one another and discuss the possibility of ministry together, the candidate shall be excused. The Call Committee may stay for fuller discussion, or may be excused. The vote of the Council may be taken immediately, or may be postponed to provide time for further prayer and reflection.

A two-thirds affirmative vote of the council is required to approve the recommendation of the Call Committee. The candidate should be informed immediately of the result of the vote, or the date on which a vote will be taken. As soon as a vote is taken, the Council President should inform the candidate and the Bishop's representative.

Introducing the Candidate to the Congregation

Once the Council has voted affirmatively to recommend the candidate to the congregation, and the candidate has indicated her/his desire to continue in the process, plans should be finalized for a meeting between the candidate and members of the congregation. At this point, the candidate's name may **NOT** appear in the announcement to the congregation of the plans. In fact, the candidate's name may not appear in any mailed or internet publication until the candidate has accepted the call.

There should be two types of events planned: members should have an opportunity to meet with the pastor (and family) informally, and the congregation should also be able to experience the pastor leading worship and preaching. The congregational vote is held on the day that the candidate preaches.

A plan should be made for the candidate to meet with members of the congregation on a Saturday at an informal reception, and then lead worship in the congregation on the following morning. The candidate shall prepare a one-page biography to be available at the reception. Normally, the congregation will hold only one service that day, at which the candidate will preach and lead worship. It would be helpful to provide a time for questions and answers following the worship service at which the pastor has presided. Members of the Call Committee and Congregation Council should be prepared to respond.

Announcing the Congregational Call Meeting

The chief lay leader will arrange for the announcement of the Congregational Call Meeting in accordance with the requirements of the congregation's Constitution. These normally include notification by first-class mail at least ten days, including two Sundays, in advance of the meeting (including the Sunday on which the vote is held). It is important that the chief lay leader consult the congregation's Constitution for any other stipulations.

There will be only two items of business at the meeting: 1) a vote to call the candidate to be pastor, and 2) a vote on the compensation package for the pastor. The Bishop's Associate, Conference Dean, a Synod Council member, or another representative authorized by the Bishop will conduct the meeting.

The announcement in writing pertaining to the special congregational meeting to call a pastor shall not include the name of the candidate or any identifying information. The announcement of the meeting may be made as follows:

On Sunday, (date) following the (time) service, a special congregational meeting will be conducted to elect a pastor of the church to serve this congregation. A representative of the Office of the Bishop will preside at the meeting.

The candidate being recommended by the Congregation Council will lead the service and preach. Following the service, the meeting will be held during which a congregational vote on the candidate will take place by paper ballot. Time for questions will be provided.

A two-thirds majority is required for the election of a pastor, and no absentee ballots are permitted. There will also be a vote on the recommended compensation package for the pastor, which may be decided by voice or hand vote, and requires a simple majority. No other items of business may be conducted at this meeting.

The Finance Committee of the Council prepares a compensation package and sends it to the Associate to the Bishop for review

It is important to consult closely with the candidate so that clarity and transparency are included in the discussions. This is also vital as there are tax implications to clergy compensation that are unique.

The Associate to the Bishop can provide a working document for the preparation of the compensation package as well as a blank *Definition of Compensation, Benefits*, and *Responsibilities of the Pastor* form to be completed when agreement is reached between the council and candidate. Please see the Healthy Transition Resource Guide to review Synod compensation guidelines.

The Council meets with the candidate to discuss compensation, start date, moving concerns, and other details related to call

A congregational meeting date is determined with the congregation, candidate, and the Associate to the Bishop who will preside over the call vote.

The Work of the Congregation

There are only two items on the agenda at the special meeting: 1) the call vote, and 2) the compensation package. As a reminder of the partnership between the congregation and the synod during the call process, the Bishop's representative, the Dean, a Synod Council member, or another representative authorized by the Bishop will conduct the special congregational meeting to elect a pastor.

The chief lay leader shall be in communication with that representative of the Bishop in order to ascertain that the meeting has been announced according to the Constitution and that everything is in order for the day. There should be ballots, writing utensils, tellers, and an adequate number of copies of the compensation package for distribution. Plans should be made to greet the candidate and provide necessary information for the conduct of the service.

The meeting should take place immediately after the service. After time for further questions of the candidate, and an opportunity for the candidate to address the congregation if she/he desires to do so, the candidate (and family) leaves the room. Discussion may continue until there is a sense that the congregation is ready to proceed with the vote.

The representative of the Bishop announces the results of this written ballot. The compensation package is voted by a show of hands following this announcement. The chief lay officer shall contact the candidate as soon as possible with the number of affirmative and negative votes. If the candidate has remained at the church, it would be appropriate to call her/him back into the meeting to announce a positive vote with acclamation.

A favorable vote indicates that a call has been extended by the congregation to the candidate. The pastor-elect has thirty days in which to respond to the call. In many cases the person will respond immediately, but there are times when a pastor-elect might want to take additional time for prayerful consideration.

Letter of Call

The Bishop's representative will bring the Letter of Call to the meeting. The chief lay leader should have the completed *Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor* form (see the *Healthy Transitions* Resource Guide).

Following an affirmative call vote, these documents are signed by the Council President, newly called pastor, and congregational Secretary, and brought back to the Synod Office by the Bishop's representative. Assuming that the documents are in good order, and consistent with the understanding that has been reached by all parties, the Bishop will attest to the call by signing the forms. The originals will be given to the newly called pastor, and copies kept at the Synod Office for filing, and sent to the congregation.

Remember that in many cases the pastor will next be involved with the announcement of the new call to her/his present congregation, and will need to take an appropriate amount of time to conclude that ministry and plan the move to a new location. It is recommended that a pastor take a minimum of two weeks transition time between calls, not including the time that the move requires. Although both the pastor and congregation will be eager to begin the new relationship, it is wise to allow time for rest and renewal before the demands of the new ministry begin.

The Start-Up Phase

After the call has been voted upon by the congregation, the Start-Up team begins its work

Welcoming the Pastor

A committee should be appointed to coordinate the welcome of the new pastor and family. This group could first oversee any renovation that is required for the parsonage. It will surely be an important sign of the congregation's reception to the new pastor if the parsonage is freshly painted, carpets clean, all appliances in good repair, bushes trimmed and grass mowed. This group can also assist with other aspects of the pastor's relocation, and serve as a steering committee for a social time on the pastor's first Sunday, and other opportunities to get acquainted with the congregation and community.

Once the move has been planned it will also be important to provide such additional activities as hospitality to the pastor and pastor's family on moving day, assistance with settlement into the community, and an event in the congregation to welcome the new pastor. All these efforts to prepare housing, greet and welcome the pastor and family, and provide assistance will be much appreciated, and will help to assure the good beginning of a strong ministry between pastor and congregation.

Moving Costs

The congregation is responsible for the cost of the move. These include payment for moving personal goods, mileage for family cars, and costs of meals and motels, if the distance requires. Estimates from moving companies offering discounts should be received and the congregation invoiced directly.

In a short-distance move it may be tempting for the pastor to assume the move personally, or for a moving crew from the congregation to undertake it in order to reduce expenses. Congregations should bear in mind, however, that either has the potential of injury to persons or property, thereby straining the future relation between the pastor and congregation. If necessary, the pastor may be encouraged to carefully pack as many personal belongings as possible, thereby reducing professional moving costs.

There may be tax implications for the pastor connected with moving expenses. He/she should obtain the IRS publication 521, "Moving Expenses" and consult with his or her tax advisor.
Once the move has been planned it will also be important to provide such additional activities as hospitality to the pastor and pastor's family on moving day, assistance with settlement into the community, and an event in the congregation to welcome the new pastor. All these efforts to prepare housing, greet and welcome the pastor and family, and provide assistance will be much appreciated, and will help to assure the good beginning of a strong ministry between pastor and congregation.

The Start-Up Team begins inviting the congregation to help with a *Welcome to Our New Pastor* guidebook

This booklet may include well wishes and prayers written by members of the congregation. Suggested best restaurants, doctors, dentists, etc.

Consider a Welcome Basket of food and goodies to be placed in the parsonage upon arrival by your new pastor. One congregation we know of, chose to stock the refrigerator for the newly arrived pastor. These gestures are important ways to welcome your new pastor and get off to a good start in ministry together.

The Start-Up Team plans a welcome party for the new pastor, possibly for his/her first Sunday or another convenient day

The Call Committee continues to meet and serve as a support team for the new pastor for the first six months

They are encouraged to meet once a month with the new pastor for this time period. This is to be a supportive committee assisting the pastor as he or she settles in to the congregation and community.

Mutual Ministry/Staff Support Committee

It is recommended that a Mutual Ministry Committee, or Staff Support Committee be established within 6 to 12 months of the pastor's arrival. This committee's primary purpose is to strengthen the pastor's ministry through careful listening and sharing, reviewing and reflecting on the shared ministry, and providing an opportunity for fuller communication with the congregation.

It would be beneficial to develop goals for the ministry, and to engage in regular and mutual feedback and evaluation. It is recommended that members of the call committee serve in this capacity for the new pastor's first year. After that year, a new Mutual Ministry Committee should be established with selections made by the Pastor in consultation with the Council President.

In consultation with the Conference Dean, a Service of Installation should be planned for the Pastor and Congregation

This typically takes place during the first three months. Make sure that both the Associate to the Bishop as well as the Bishop are invited to participate. Invitations should sent out to area congregations well in advance of this event.

Service of Installation

The Service of Installation shall be arranged by the pastor, parish musician, congregation, Conference Dean and Bishop's representative. Normally the Dean shall serve as the installing pastor and the pastor shall invite a preacher for the installation service. The pastor and resident musician may work together to plan any special music for the liturgy.

The Bishop's representative shall assist with matters related to the transition and be available for support and guidance for the pastor and family. There shall be a visit planned to the Congregation Council toward the end of the first year to provide an opportunity for conversation and feedback, and to assure the pastor and congregational leadership of the ongoing support and involvement of the Office of the Bishop.

At the three month mark, invite the New England Synod Listening Team to conduct a one day workshop for the Council, staff, pastor and lay leadership

This workshop is called *New Beginnings: Starting off Ministry Together, Working through Differences.*

The Associate to the Bishop meets with the newly called pastor, the Call Committee, and the Council at the six month mark

At this meeting a list of goals and objectives for the next six months is outlined.

Visioning: Discerning a New Season of Mission and Ministry

After the new pastor and congregation have been together for six months and have gotten to know each other, the time is ripe to engage in a process of visioning together. This is a wonderful time to assess the present ministry of the congregation and to think and pray about where God is leading as the congregation goes forward in ministry with its new pastor. This visioning may take several forms.

Congregations most often opt to work with a visioning mentor appointed in cooperation with the Office of the Bishop (in most cases a pastor or layperson who has been trained to lead such a process), who works with a visioning team in a variety of formats: a series of events, an overnight retreat, or a combination thereof.

Leaders and other interested members of the congregation are trained in the fundamentals of gathering data, and encouraged to grow in the attitudes and habits of “being visionary.” In this model, too, demographic information may be profitably employed. Costs are negotiated with the leader, depending on the format and duration of the process. By the end of the process, participants may expect at least a draft of a vision statement to be produced, and used later to help shape mission priorities.

Conclusion

The steps outlined in this document have provided a procedure that is orderly and helpful in calling a pastor. However, the real work has been done by the Holy Spirit who has been present in all of the activities, and in the hearts and lives of the persons who have worked with the process, guiding us all into a new season of ministry. We thank God for this gift of power that assists us all in fulfilling God’s mission in the world in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.