

# North/West Lower Michigan Synod Call Process Manual



North/West Lower Michigan Synod ELCA

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Revised September 2023

## Welcome to the Call Process!

This greeting is indeed a mixed blessing. Your pastor or deacon is leaving, whether through resignation, retirement, or death, and the present is full of mixed emotions and the future is uncertain. The stakes seem high—and they are. Some say the right rostered minister will help a struggling congregation to soar and the wrong rostered minister will bring a soaring congregation crashing to earth. While this is sometimes true, the greater truth is that our confession of Jesus Christ is the rock on which Jesus builds his church (Matthew 16:18).

Though your pastor or deacon may be leaving or gone, Jesus is not leaving you and Jesus will not leave you. With the apostle Paul, we declare, “Indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39). So lay aside your understandable expediency to get through the call process and strive to open yourselves to the Holy Spirit, who may be deliberate, or even slow, for the Triune God leads this process as surely as God led Israel through the wilderness to the land of promise. In fact, congregations—particularly call committees and congregational councils—who can minimize their anxiety about and need to control the call process by prayerfully listening and trusting the Triune God report that they experience God’s presence, power, and tendency to surprise in very tangible ways.

You are not alone. Pastor Christina Bright, Pastor David Sprang, and I, together with congregations and individuals around the Synod, are praying for you in this period of transition. Pastor Bright, Pastor Sprang, and I meet every Wednesday to discuss and pray over every congregation in the call process. While every member of the Synod Staff is involved in the call process in some way, Pastor Bright and I serve as guides. Pastor Sprang consults with congregations that desire to consider their mission and stewardship as part of the call process. We all know that this is a pivotal time in the life of a congregation that directly impacts Christ’s work in Michigan and beyond. I am grateful for the wisdom, grace, and joy that our staff brings to this work. We pray you come to trust that you are in good hands.

What we name the call process is really a period or journey of transition that begins the moment the pastor or deacon resigns and continues even after the time the new pastor or deacon is installed. On average across the ELCA, the journey from a congregation submitting its paperwork to installing its new rostered minister is taking on average 18 to 24 months.

This manual is a map of the journey, particularly for the Congregation Council, Transition Committee, Call Committee and any others who may be involved in the transition process.

- This manual is an evolving document; we review and revise it periodically to incorporate changes in the church and the world and best practices in the call process. Some on this journey are surprised to learn that the call process changes and is not what it was even a few years ago. They get “stuck” trying to restore the call process to the way it “should” be. Like the church itself, the call process changes.

- This manual describes a unique process. While broadly the same across our church, the call process in every synod is unique to address the uniqueness of its context. For example, our synod is not a “destination synod,” like those in Minneapolis, Chicago, or Seattle. Some on this journey get “stuck” when they experience differences in other synod’s call processes and think that something is wrong.
- This manual is not a personnel policy or a hiring guide. The Constitution for Congregations asserts: “The call of this congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment...” (\*C9.05.a). We find the call process to be more like a courtship than a hiring process. While we use some of the tools of human relations including interviewing, you are not “hiring” a pastor or deacon. People skilled in personnel or human relations sometimes find this challenging.
- This manual is a public document; you are welcome to share it with every member of your congregation. Yet, we communicate only with the church council president and the call committee chair. Members of the congregation should address their questions to those leaders rather than calling the Synod Staff.

This manual is intended to guide you from the departure of your pastor or deacon to the installation of your new pastor or deacon. It includes documents for the departing rostered minister, call committee, and congregation council. Each chapter indicates the group for whom it is most useful, but we recommend that everyone involved in the transition read the entire manual.

Even as we provide a guide and a map, we best not forget that the Holy Spirit leads this journey. God, rather than any of us, is in charge of the call process. So God is the best person to be in conversation with—through prayer, listening, reflection, assessing, discipleship, and pressing forward. Bible study and prayer should be integral to your call process.

God will help us to hear our siblings and realize that people in the congregation and community are experiencing a wide range of feelings: anger, fear, grief, relief, excitement—and not all at the same time. Like the Israelites on their journey, some among us will be impatient and some will view this in-between time of wandering in the wilderness as an unnecessary waste. They may stop coming and stop giving. Anxiety can be high. Trusting that God is leading helps us embrace the time between pastoral leadership of the congregation as a holy season set apart for mission and vision as the congregation discerns the gifts needed in the next leader God is shaping for ministry in this place and time. It is a time to grieve, to celebrate, to wait on the Lord.

The call process involves the three expressions of our church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: (1) the congregation is the ministry site that the Lord is preparing for a new leader; (2) the synod, through the bishop’s office, works with the congregation/ministry and with rostered ministers to find and recommend candidates with needed gifts, passions and expectations; (3) the churchwide organization provides the system in which we find Ministers of Word and Sacrament (Pastors) or Ministers of Word

and Service (Deacons) who have a call to serve the whole church for the building up of all through the grace and love of Jesus the Christ. In this regard, all call processes are “national searches.”

Across the ELCA, the call process for full-time calls is taking, on average, 18 to 24 months from the time a congregation submits its paperwork to when a rostered minister is installed. Yet, this is not a prescribed period of time—it depends upon the Holy Spirit and the people of God. Sometimes there is a pastor available with the gifts needed and desired by a congregation right at the moment they are ready; sometimes there is not. Sometimes the pastor has the "right" gifts or skills, but neither the pastor nor the congregation feels God's call into this relationship. The number of full-time calls greatly outnumbers the number of available pastors so I highly recommend that call committees interview every candidate we present to them.

Part-time pastors need a reason other than the congregation to move to a community. They also need means of making a living in addition to the congregation. Pastors serving part-time increasingly desire not to be committed every Sunday but to lead worship on a part-time basis.

In response to these realities, some call committees take time to pray and grow in faith. Other councils move quickly to expedite the process and sometimes that hurriedness means self-understanding is truncated and the process is bogged down rather than sped up.

God bless you as you set out on this journey that will prove to be an adventure. Study your map, consult your guides, pay attention to the God who leads you, and be ready to be surprised. As your pastor when you don't have a pastor, know that you hold a special place in my heart and in my prayers.

Peace,

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop

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# Chapter 1: Closure – Our Pastor is Leaving... But Jesus is Staying!

(Council and Other Leaders)

When a rostered minister submits a letter of resignation to the congregation/parish council, the council has a new set of responsibilities. As soon as possible, the council notifies both the congregation and the Office of the Bishop about the resignation, including the date the resignation is effective.

Out of care for their congregation, most rostered ministers are in conversation with Bishop Satterlee prior to resigning. We recommend the rostered minister meet with the council early in the week to resign. The next day, a letter and email should be sent to the congregation so that everyone receives the news as soon as possible before they come to church the following Sunday. A letter from the pastor or deacon might be followed immediately by a letter from the council president. All involved should exercise care with regard to both conversation and social media, so that members of the congregation do not discover the news secondhand. The letter should be the first in an ongoing communication plan that recognizes people will feel differently about the transition.

## **How People will Respond**

The resignation of a pastor or deacon usually comes as a shock to most people in the congregation and often brings a lot of questions. Why do they want to leave? Did we do something that made them want to leave? Is there any way we can change their mind? Is our pastor or deacon going someplace "better" or someplace "bigger?" Why now? Did someone or a group of people drive them out?

These questions are rooted in confusion and grief. Even in times of planned resignation or retirement, members of the congregation will experience grief. The challenge is that members of the congregation will be at different stages. A temptation might be to just move on, to state, "We just need to get over it." The time to move forward will come in time. For now, it is important for the congregation to express grief as the first step of moving forward. Leadership should support one another and listen to the congregation.

People may experience:

- **Denial:** Despite the announcements in letters, emails, and individual conversation, some will say, "Pastor X is leaving?" It may be that they haven't read the information sent out or are truly unable to imagine the congregation without the pastor. Leadership cannot assume all people know or accept that the pastor is leaving. When people are in denial, things can be overwhelming and things won't make sense. This is not the time to make major decisions, particularly about calling a pastor.
- **Anger:** Anger might surface in many ways. Some may be angry at the pastor, others at people they hold responsible for the pastor's departure. Still others might be angry at the synod or bishop for taking the pastor or allowing the pastor to leave. Anger is a secondary emotion; it is a manifestation of shock, grief, loss, or feeling numb. Anger feels more active than remaining passive and helpless. Again, this is not a time for major decisions. It's a time when leadership wants to be responsive but not reactive.

- **Bargaining:** Some people will wonder: If we had done something different, would our pastor have stayed? If we do something different, will our pastor stay? The "if only" and "what if" statements can take on a life of their own. This is a time when people remember the past and wonder what would have happened if things could have been different. The time spent in this stage varies, and people will move in and out of this phase.
- **Depression:** The person moves into the present and becomes sad, even despairing. This stage feels like it could last forever. People believe things will never be the same again. People may withdraw from worship, activities, and each other and may become part of another congregation for a time. Leadership should recognize depression as an important part of the process and a time to remain connected with each other without forcing people through this stage before they are ready.
- **Acceptance:** The time comes when the congregation accepts the reality of the pastor's departure. Acceptance does not mean that everyone considers what happened okay or alright. Rather, people admit to themselves and to each other the reality and are ready to move along in the process. It is accepting we will not be able to replace or replicate our pastor or past, but we can move forward into the future as a congregation.

People may vacillate between stages. Everyone in the congregation will not be in the same place at any one time. As leaders, you will need to recognize where you are in the process and support each other along the way. Each person will experience this differently and that is normal.

### **Initial Tasks**

In spite of—or in the midst of—the grief, certain things need to be completed and tended to before your Pastor or Deacon departs:

- **Thanksgiving at the Conclusion of a Call:** Because a resignation signals the end of an important relationship, congregation members may experience feelings associated with grief (sadness, anger, anxiety, etc.). In order to assist the congregation in beginning to move through this experience, the council arranges for a farewell event and closure service for the resigning leader and their family. A service of farewell and godspeed in the final worship service is a great way to publicly recognize the leader and congregation's relationship and to thank God for the time and ministry together. The Order of Service is included in *Occasional Services for the Assembly* (page 111).
- **Exit Interview:** The bishop expects an exit interview with the rostered minister and council to bring closure and order to the conclusion of a ministry. Either the bishop or representative of the Office of the Bishop, appointed by the bishop, conducts the interview with the rostered minister and members of council. The interview is scheduled within the rostered minister's last 30 days. Samples of exit interview agendas are available in Addenda E and F. These samples should be approached as prompts instead of strict guides since Bishop Satterlee and his representatives tend to be creative

in their questions. The exit interview includes addressing and completing the "**Certificate of Church Records**" and "**Certification of Completion of Financial Records**" and also reviews the church's expectations of former rostered ministers in relating to their former congregations. At the exit interview the bishop or the bishop's representative will dismiss the departing pastor and discuss the transition process with the council.

- Obtain a forwarding address to forward any mail that the pastor should receive and to mail anything that is not completed by the time of departure. It is helpful if the pastor provides their mailing address, phone number, and email address to the bishop's office as well.
- Arrange for the termination of the rostered minister's congregational voicemail and email address and return of keys, computer, and any other items.
- Parsonage: If there is a parsonage, schedule a walkthrough with the current pastor. Discuss any issues that develop during this walkthrough.
- Portico Benefits: The council president and treasurer ensure that an "**End of Call**" form is completed (available at [www.porticobenefits.org](http://www.porticobenefits.org)) so that billing from Portico ceases. Until this is filed, you are responsible for the pension and benefits. The pastor or deacon will complete a "**Change of Call**" form for Portico (available at [www.porticobenefits.org](http://www.porticobenefits.org)).
- In consultation with the bishop's office, begin to arrange for supply preachers following the pastor's last day and begin to determine what the congregation will need during the time without a called pastor. Bishop Satterlee endeavors to have a member of the Synod Staff preach within the first few weeks after the completion of a call. The bishop's office will work with congregations to determine if they are best served by an intentional interim pastor, a regular supply pastor, or arranging weekly supply pastors. Increasingly, availability is challenging so consultation with the bishop's office is expected. The current supply pastor list is available on the Synod's website: <https://www.mittensynod.org/congregations/resources-for-congregations/>

### **Saying Goodbye with Grace and Care**

Saying goodbye can be one of the most difficult and important aspects of this transition. A clear, grace-filled goodbye assists the members of the congregation, the departing pastor and their family to move through this transition, and helps prepare the way for the pastor or deacon and their family who will come. The normal desire is to maintain relationships with the pastor and the pastor with the congregation. However, when a pastor leaves, the relationship as pastor and congregation no longer exists. For this reason we say goodbye with grace, rather than saying so long or see you later. For further information see Addendum G: Pastoral Ethics. A Covenant for Departing Pastors (Addendum H) is sent to each member and regular participants of the congregation.

As part of saying goodbye, both the departing pastor or deacon and the congregation's leaders proclaim



the gospel. They announce and assure the congregation that this is Christ's church, that Jesus remains, even as the pastor or deacon departs, that nothing can separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ, that Jesus will bring new life out of death of this relationship, and that, while things will certainly change, the gospel will be preached, the sacraments administered, and Christ will be among us.

## Chapter 2: Preparing for the Work Ahead

(Council, Transitional, and Call Committees)

The period of preparation is important to the transition and should not be rushed. Intentional prayer and discernment (listening to God and to one another) keeps preparation focused and deliberate and is vital to the result. During this time, leaders in the congregation will need to work together to ensure ministry continues. This can be an exciting time as people in the congregation step forward to help. Do not hesitate to invite people to participate in the work of the congregation, and ministry of the church.

The Synod Staff will discuss available options for pastoral leadership during the transition period. The bishop's office determines what options are available and best for the congregation at this time and makes a recommendation/appointment and consultation with the congregation council.

Options may include:

1. Contracting with or calling an Intentional Interim Pastor. These are pastors with specific training to work with congregations in transition or are in the process of receiving the training. Because of the low number of pastors called for this special ministry, availability is limited.
2. Contracting or securing a regular or stated supply pastor. These pastors are either on leave from call or retired. Responsibilities may range from preaching and presiding only to including some days in the office, visitation and/or work with the Council and other committees. These responsibilities along with compensation and reimbursements need to be written into a contract, signed, and reviewed by the bishop's office.
3. Contracting with an Administrative Pastor. In some cases a local pastor will be contracted as the Administrative Pastor while supply pastors serve on Sunday mornings. The Administrative Pastor holds the authority of an interim pastor, advises the Council and other leadership and may do some visitation.
4. Securing a supply pastor each week. This means that a different pastor will preach each week or over a period of time. There is not a contract. Area pastors can be contacted to provide some pastoral care or the supply pastor can agree to serve. The pulpit supply list is available at <https://www.mittensynod.org/congregations/resources-for-congregations/>

During the transition period, communication of leaders with the congregation is imperative and should be a priority. This is a time to review the history of the congregation, to discuss the hopes and dreams of the congregation, to name the congregation's challenges, conflicts, and difficulties, and to lift up in prayer the preparation of the pastor and congregation. Consider including this petition each Sunday in the Prayers of the People and in regular Council and committee meetings:

Loving God, be with us and give us confidence in your presence and love in Jesus Christ. Guide us during

this time of discernment. Fill our leaders with your wisdom. Keep us mindful of the work you would have us do. Lead us and guide us O Lord to be about the work of your kingdom even as the search for a new pastor continues. Bless all who have taken on extra responsibility, and fill them with a sense of your love and presence. We pray in your Son's name, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen (Or Lord in your mercy, receive our Prayer.)

### **“What is a “Call?”**

At the heart of our Lutheran theology is something Martin Luther termed “the priesthood of all believers.” In the waters of baptism, all people receive the promise of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins. God names each of us “Child of God,” seals us with the Holy Spirit and marks us with the cross of Christ forever. Through these waters Christ brings us into his body and we become members of the priesthood of all believers. The Holy Spirit through the Christian community nurtures us, equips us to carry out the ministry to which we are called, and sends us out in service as ambassadors for Christ in and to the world. In baptism, God calls us all to be part of the body of Christ. We each take up our vocation or our calling as God's people. We are all ministers in whatever daily activity is ours. Within this priesthood of all believers there exists the offices of ministry: Word and Sacrament and Word and Service.

On the basis of our Lutheran theology, a pastor is called (not hired) to serve a congregation. The call process is not the same as the hiring process in other parts of society. Any process that seems to focus on headhunting, resume shuffling, or high anxiety interviews is missing the point in the calling of a pastor. A call is one element in the church's seeking and following God's movement into the future.

The call process is not a pageant, in which contestants present themselves to their best advantage so they will be the winners. The Lutheran call process is unique because it is an effort to discern what God wants for the local church and for the whole church in order that the Gospel may be proclaimed and the sacraments administered in accordance with the Gospel.

Issuing a call to a pastor or deacon requires: (1) a 2/3 majority congregational vote for the candidate; (2) the president and secretary of the congregation, representing the congregation's decision, must sign the Letter of Call and (3) the bishop, representing the whole church, must sign the Letter of Call. When a pastor is called it is truly a call to the whole church. Be sure to read Addendum I: “A Theology of Call.”

### **Completing the Ministry Site Profile**

The Ministry Site Profile (MSP) is a document used throughout the ELCA, which is completed by congregations in transition seeking a new rostered minister. The MSP is used by the bishop's office to help determine suitable candidates for interview and is reviewed by potential candidates as they discern whether to interview with a particular congregation.

Some councils will choose not to complete a Ministry Site Profile. In this case, the bishop and staff are entrusted to prayerfully bring candidates to the call committee without any paperwork. If this is the case, some written information will still be helpful. The call committee will not receive the Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) of prospective candidates in this case, though some written information may be available.

The bishop's office expects that if this route is chosen, every candidate will be interviewed. In this case, there will be much more emphasis placed on the interview so extra time for interviews will need to be considered.

The completion of the MSP is the responsibility of the council. Some will choose to assemble the call committee and ask them to complete it. Some will assign a sub-committee of the council. Some will assemble a Transition Team to survey the congregation and create the profile. Some will entrust the MSP to a single author, whose work will be widely reviewed. Whatever approach you choose, be sure to include as much congregational input as possible in this process. If an interim or intentional interim pastor is working with the congregation, they will participate in surveying and creating the profile. The MSP should be approved by the council before it is submitted online.

One challenge of this phase of the process is not to rush completing the MSP. Taking the time necessary to determine the congregation's mission, goals, vision, and expectations is essential to both identifying the gifts and passions it seeks in its next pastoral leader and a successful call process. Simply updating the previous MSP usually proves detrimental to the call process.

If the congregation contracts with an Intentional Interim Pastor, this pastor may develop a Transition Team to help with the assessment of the congregation and provide information valuable to the MSP and call process. Even if an Interim Pastor is not contracted, leaders should seek the wisdom of the congregation and, if possible, the community.

Ask:

- What is God calling us to now?
- What does the congregation need?
- What does our community need?
- What do we discern as our goals as we live into God's mission?

This may be done in the form of surveys, one-on-ones or small groups. Just don't skip listening for the many voices through whom the Holy Spirit will speak.

The congregation might invite Pastor Sprang to use MissionInsite, a research tool, to help them understand their context in terms of opportunity for mission and/or the ELCA's Congregational Vitality Survey to assess their ministry and needs. The congregation might also invite Pastor Sprang to assist them with stewardship.

The period of preparation is among the most important parts of the transition and call process. If not done well, the MSP can be misleading and result in miscommunication of expectations and potential lack of trust in building relationships. Use this time to honestly assess where the congregation is currently and where God's mission is calling the congregation to be. It is important to be as honest and forthright as possible. You can imagine the struggle if you report the congregation wants a leader who has the gifts of creativity/innovation, recruiting and equipping leaders, and preaching/leading worship; however, in reality,

the congregation expects the pastor to spend most of their time visiting the homebound and providing pastoral care. When completing the MSP, be as specific as possible rather than writing platitudes. For example, if your congregation is welcoming, give an example of welcome rather than just calling yourselves welcoming.

### **Completing and Entering the Ministry Site Profile**

Regardless of how the MSP is completed, it should be reviewed by the council and made available to the entire congregation for their review and consent. Some congregations vote on the MSP before it is submitted. When the MSP is submitted, the Synod Staff reviews it and will reach out with questions, areas that need clarifying, or points of concern.

The MSP must be completed online via the ELCA website. It is best to designate one person to do the data entry. The MSP will ultimately become a PDF document available to Synod Staff and Rostered Ministers on [www.elca.org/call](http://www.elca.org/call). If you have not already done so, you will need to create an account for the congregation or ministry site. This can be done at <https://webapps.elca.org/call/Login.aspx?MSP=1>. If an account was created at another time, but no one knows the password, it is possible to create a new account and can be done through the link provided above. Make sure to remember the account name and password, because you will need that if you want to access or make changes to the MSP in the future. A sample MSP is available at <https://www.elca.org/Call-Process/Ministry-Sites>.

As you enter the information, be sure that what you document is truthful. You do not need to fill all the space, but bullet points may not be enough. This is your first introduction to a potential pastor, so put your best foot forward. Below are some suggestions for the profile. Some sections require the selection from a drop down answer. If nothing is completely applicable, choose the best answer. Some helpful tips are provided below.

### **Ministry Site Profile Tips**

#### **Part One: Who We Are**

1. Your Congregational ID number remains constant. You may locate it on the parochial reports (Form A&C) that are submitted to the ELCA annually. If you are unable to locate the Congregational ID number, contact the Synod Office.
2. Double check all contact information (especially email addresses) is correct. Some churches have P.O. Boxes when there is not a mailbox at the location of the physical church building.
3. Demographics: Some congregations will research this in depth; however we don't need exact data. The information is often helpful and telling about a congregation.
4. Information comes from Reports of the Treasurer.

#### **Part Two: Our Vision for Mission**

5. When recording the three ways the community has been challenged or changed, give enough

information that a potential candidate who is not from the area can get an idea of the challenge. Please be honest. When listing three trends in the congregation, utilizing the trend report may be helpful in addressing issues of membership, attendance, money, and giving. Potential candidates will likely be looking at this report when they are discerning if they want to interview with the congregation.

6. Ministry Site Characteristics: This part can be confusing. Look at the statements across from each other. First determine which statement best describes your congregation. Then, determine if it is a little like us or a lot like us.
7. Purpose, Giftedness, and Mission: The MSP is a summary description for those seeking a call. You want it to align with what they might see from the congregation's website when they are searching for more information about your ministry setting and the surrounding community. Sell your community—if you are on a lake, in a college community, in a beautiful Northern Michigan, etc. Also include a brief description of the type of candidate you are seeking. A question you might consider as you write this section is why would a pastor want to serve with us in ministry? Be specific.
8. References: Use only the Synod Office phone number for Bishop Satterlee (517-321-5066).

#### Part Three: Leadership Needs

9. A Minister of Word and Sacrament is a Pastor. A Minister of Word and Service is a Deacon. In Candidacy/First Call would be a candidate who will soon or has recently completed seminary.
10. Top 5 Ministry Tasks/Gifts for Ministry: What do you want/need in your next pastor? Some congregations use a survey method to complete this section. You will see some items that seem very similar. Please select the five most important. If you need someone with a specific gift, mark it. The committee should have a unified agreement on what each gift means to them, so that when interviewing a candidate they will be able to answer. You may want to consider defining the gifts the congregation needs in Part Four: Commentary. For instance, if administration is needed, what do you mean by this? Does this mean they will be the only one in the office, expected to facilitate all meetings, need to keep an neat office? Explain.
11. Mutual Expectation: These statements are important as they are the statements that will likely be carried over in the Statement of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities when a pastor is called and accepted. Knowing that a new pastor cannot do everything the first year, what do you see as the priorities. In turn, what can the pastor expect the congregation to do to assist. Many early conflicts begin because of lack of clarity in expectations for both the pastor and the congregation.
12. Compensation: Often the available compensation package determines the level of experience a congregation is able to call. Please talk with the bishop's office about what it might mean for your congregation. Maximum Defined Compensation includes salary, housing, or parsonage allowance

and Social Security offset. It does **not** include benefits. The bishop's office can help in this area if there is misunderstanding. Compensation shall reflect the time for which the rostered minister is called. In other words, if full-time is expected, the rostered minister shall be compensated for full-time. Current Synod Compensation Guidelines are available on the Synod's website:

<https://www.mittensynod.org/congregations/resources-for-congregations/>

15. and 16. Benefits: Contact Portico Benefits Services: <https://www.porticobenefits.org>. This is a good time to review policies and create them if you don't have them for sabbatical and parental leave as well as professional expenses. Information for these is included in the Synod Compensation Guidelines. A candidate for interview will often request materials regarding compensation and benefits before or after the initial interview.

First Call Rostered Ministers had a background check when they entered the candidacy process, which is generally at least four years prior to ordination. Congregations are responsible for current background checks.

#### Part Four: Commentary

In this section, expand or add anything you feel necessary to help a rostered minister understand your context. As stated before, consider expanding on what is meant by the five top gifts you seek in the new leader.

#### Part Five: Completion of Profile

20. The person to contact is the Synod Staff member who assists with call process. In most cases, this is Pastor Bright. If you are unsure, please ask.
21. The reference you select here must have an email address. When the MSP is submitted you will log into your account and follow the instructions to email the reference form to the person you choose. They will then complete and submit the reference online.

When the MSP is complete, share it with the congregation council for final approval. Ideally, information has been shared with the council during the process so few changes should be necessary. Prior to submitting the MSP online, it is also helpful to email it to the Synod Staff member assisting with the call process for review. That person can also offer insight into modifications that need to be made. Once all have reviewed it, submit the MSP online. Follow the directions and send a recommendation to the person you identified and complete the Seven Reflections if you desire or have been asked. Make sure to remember your login email and password.

Once the MSP has been submitted, reviewed by Synod Staff, and the recommendation received, the bishop's office will activate the MSP. This allows potential candidates to view your congregation's MSP in the ELCA database along with MSPs from other synods.

In practice, potential candidates do not begin with the MSP database because they are overwhelmed by the

quantity of MSPs they received from synods. Therefore, our Synod Staff sends the MSP to candidates after having an initial conversation with them about the congregation. Once a potential candidate has received an MSP, they typically visit the congregation's website, social media profiles, and/or YouTube channel. Therefore, congregations should make certain these resources are up-to-date and reflect the congregation's ministry. Some congregations include a call process page on their website that provides information that potential candidates might find useful. Remember that website pages and social media posts are public, so any call process pages or posts should not include the names of candidates as they are considered confidential.

### **Seven Reflections**

The Seven Reflections are questions you may wish to answer in writing. Even if you choose not to, these are good questions to reflect upon as the candidate can gain insight into the congregation. These are also questions that the candidate may ask in an interview. Questions include:

- What key issues or concerns of our church and society are reflected in your ministry context? Explain.
- How do your stewardship practices reflect your priorities?
- In what ways is your congregation or ministry similar or different from the community where it is located? Identify and explain three significant formative events in your history?
- How is the congregation or ministry involved in the larger church and ecumenical/interreligious relationships?
- Has your ministry experienced significant conflict and what did you learn? You may wish to include how the congregation handles conflict.
- Anything related to the physical building.

### **Bishop Satterlee's Survey**

Bishop Satterlee developed a survey for congregations and call committees that explores questions not included in the MSP, that, in Bishop Satterlee's experience, arise in the call process. The survey is included in Addendum M.

### **First Call Candidates**

The Synod Staff might encourage a congregation to consider calling a First Call Pastor. These candidates have completed the candidacy process and seminary education and are available now for call.

Congregations are often deemed a first call congregation if they are considered a ministry where a First Call Pastor would likely thrive (See Addendum K). If a congregation is interested in calling a First Call Pastor or if the bishop's office believes a congregation may be an appropriate First Call Congregation, the Synod Staff will engage leadership in further conversation about the realities of First Call.



First Call Pastors are required to participate in First Call Theological Education for the first three years of their ministry. Currently this includes periodic meeting with a mentor and two annual retreats. Congregations should also encourage the pastor to participate in synod leadership and continuing education events.

### **Selection of a Call Committee**

In consultation with the interim, administrative, or supply pastor and the bishop's office, the congregation will determine when the faithful time is to begin the process for calling the next pastor. Council should begin by reviewing their congregational constitution to determine if there is a constitutional statement about the number of people on the call committee and if they are selected by the council or elected by the congregation. Traditionally, the call committee is not formed until after the previous pastor has departed and a significant period of time (1-3 months) has passed. In consultation with the bishop, this work might begin earlier.

The number of members on the call committee varies, but we recommend 6-12 people. In part, this depends on the size of the congregation. If the constitution states the committee needs to have six members, the congregation may want to include up to six more people more that have voice but no vote. The goal is to have a cross section of people in the congregation: i.e. selection by age, gender, race, length of time as a member, active and less active, attendance at different worship times(if the congregation has more than one worship time). If not indicated by the constitution, the call committee selects the chair of the committee. Voting members of the call committee must be members of the congregation in good standing.

The call committee should be installed in a worship service to ground their work in Word and Sacrament and to encourage the congregation to include those selected to serve in this ministry in their prayers. A general service of Affirmation of Christian Vocation may be adapted for use (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, page 84).

Congregation presidents serve as ex-officio members of the call committee, but we recommend presidents serve as an encourager, not as an active member, and that they do not attend meetings or initial interviews. The number of council members on the call committee should be limited. It is the responsibility of the call committee chair to communicate with the congregation president; a responsibility that can be delegated to another member of the call committee who also serves on council.

### **Getting Started with the Call Committee**

After the MSP is completed and the call committee installed, the call committee should contact the bishop's office to schedule Call Committee Training. Training takes place via Zoom and is led by the Bishop and/or Assistant to the Bishop. Training includes understanding the difference between calling and hiring, information about where potential candidates come from, preparation for interviews and the process for moving forward with a candidate. Rostered Minister Profiles (RMPs) will not be given to call committees until they have completed the training.

One of the benefits and responsibilities of the call committee is to build relationships with each other and thereby learn more about who the congregation is and what ministries the congregation participates in. Because of the cross section of people on the call committee, it is likely that members will learn something about each other and one of the congregation's ministries.

Sometimes congregation members desire to serve on the call committee because they have a specific desire in a pastor. It is important to listen to these desires, but to also encourage people to open their hearts to the Holy Spirit and allow it to move with the call committee for the good of the whole congregation. In fact, it is more important to be a good listener than to push one's own agenda.

Each meeting of the call committee should begin with Bible study and prayer. A few options are included in Addendum K. Some call committees will rotate this responsibility, others will designate a devotion leader. Devotions need to be intentional so as not to rush into just getting the work done. The need for personal prayer and prayer within the call committee cannot be overstated and it is important to invite God into the conversation and open our ears.

During these devotions, or as part of the meeting agenda, the call committee should review the Theology of a Call (Addendum H) and Qualities and Gifts for Public Ministry (Addendum J). The call committee should be very familiar with the congregation's Ministry Site Profile (MSP) and to be able to answer questions about it.

The Call Committee should regularly communicate with the congregation where they are in the call process. Some methods of communication include bulletin blurbs, newsletter articles, a display in the narthex or fellowship hall, email updates, verbal announcements, and videos. Be as creative as you like, be thorough, and be regular in your communicating. However you communicate, do not report the names of candidates you are interviewing as interviews are confidential.

## Chapter Three: Receiving Candidates and Interviewing

### (Call Committee)

After the congregation submits their MSP, it is likely very anxious to move forward. This is probably the time that will require the most patience, prayer and understanding as call processes in the ELCA takes 18-24 months on average. The leadership of the congregation will need to model patience for everyone and will need to stay in constant communication with them, even if the update is that nothing has happened in the last week.

During this time, the bishop's office is reviewing the MSP and searching for potential candidates who have identified the gifts the congregation listed in their MSP. In the ELCA, pastors and deacons interested in a new call complete a Rostered Minister Profile (RMP). As part of this paperwork, pastors and deacons indicate the regions and synods where they are open to serve. The bishop's office is alerted whenever a candidate indicates their openness to serve in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod.

When the bishop's office is alerted to a new candidate, Pastor Bright and Bishop Satterlee review the candidate's RMP and, if there is potential, they schedule a Zoom interview with the candidate to get to know them, establish a relationship, and share possibilities. Pastor Bright and/or Bishop Satterlee then sends MSPs to the candidate to review. If the candidate is open to interviews, Pastor Bright and/or Bishop Satterlee then sends the RMP to the congregation's call committee chair. Please note that candidates must be in good standing on the ELCA roster and that may not possess all of the gifts listed on a congregation's MSP. All candidates have a confidential bishop's recommendation that Bishop Satterlee reviews prior to scheduling the Zoom interview and giving the name and RMP to a congregation. Our desire is that the pastor is a gifted pastor for your ministry site, as well as for this synod and the whole church.

In certain circumstances, congregations may be best served by calling a person from another tradition with which the ELCA has a Full-Communion agreement. In this case, the bishop's office will be in contact with the appropriate judicatory. It is not appropriate for the congregation to initiate this process without consulting with and receiving the bishop's permission. Ecumenical partnerships are intended to serve the mission of Jesus Christ in the world, and not to merely to prolong the life of congregations that are otherwise not sustainable.

In addition to receiving candidates from the bishop's office, some congregations know pastors they would like to consider. If the congregation has names that they would like to consider, the call committee chair should submit those names to Bishop Satterlee, who will follow the appropriate process to determine whether the pastor is available for interview. Since this process takes time, it is most helpful to submit these names at the beginning of the call process. The congregation, or a member of the congregation, is not to contact the pastor directly. If a potential candidate does not have a RMP submitted but is open/available to interview, the call committee will not receive paperwork.

The call committee should use this time to develop the basic interview questions, to determine hospitality issues, to gather any publications you will want to share with candidates, to be in intentional prayer, and to

continue to discover more about your congregation and community in preparation for receiving candidates. Contact the bishop's office if you desire a practice or mock interview and we will arrange one.

Consider adding the following prayer to the Prayers of the People in worship:

Loving God, be with us and guide us during this time of discernment. Fill our leaders with your wisdom. Keep us mindful of the work you would have us do. Lead us and guide us O Lord to be about the work of your kingdom even as the search for a new pastor continues. Prepare the pastor you are calling to our congregation and prepare us to discern and recognize that calling. Prepare us in this congregation for new leadership and opportunities in this vast world in which we minister. Fill us with patience and understanding during this in between time. Lord in your mercy, receive our prayer.

### **Confidentiality**

The call committee keeps the names and profiles of all candidates in the strictest confidence throughout their work. The reason for maintaining confidentiality is respect of the other parties involved in the process (the potential rostered minister and their present congregation). It is inappropriate for a congregation to find out that a pastor is considering a new call through any means other than from the pastor.

Make sure that announcements about who is coming to interview are not posted on the website or social media and any announcements made in worship take place after the livestream or recording is turned off. How confidentiality is handled in the call process is often indicative of how confidentiality is held within the congregation in other circumstances and may cause a candidate to withdraw from the process or not accept a call.

Once a candidate has been released or withdraws from the process, each member of the call committee is expected to delete the electronic version and shred the paper version of the RMP. The call committee chair is responsible for making sure this is done. Releasing a candidate or having a candidate withdraw terminates the call committee's relationship with that candidate. Further contact is inappropriate.

### **Candidate Names Received by the Call Committee**

When a candidate notifies the bishop's office that they would like their RMP presented to the call committee, Pastor Bright and/or Bishop Satterlee will send the paperwork to the call committee chair. The bishop's office will do its best to have more than one RMP for each congregation depending on the search and availability of candidates. However, the ELCA is experiencing a shortage of pastors (or an overage of congregations), meaning the call process is taking longer than ever before and there are fewer candidates available to interview in any given call.

Additionally, some candidates who receive a congregation's MSP will decline the opportunity to interview with the congregation. Others may have questions and need time for prayer and discernment. This discernment period also depends on what else is happening in the life of the church. Rostered ministers often find themselves immersed in their current congregation in particular seasons of the church year, especially Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter, and so it may take time for them to find the time to review other MSPs. Summer brings vacations, youth trips, mission trips, family responsibilities—all of which will

impact the candidate's availability to discern faithfully.

As soon as we have a candidate to present to a call committee, the bishop's office will send the candidate's RMP electronically to the call committee chair. We do not hold candidates in reserve and so the call committee is expected to consider each candidate's paperwork at the time it is received rather than wait to receive additional candidates. There is no guarantee that there will be other candidates available and waiting creates the possibility that a congregation will miss out on a potentially good candidate.

Candidates open to more than one synod typically receive 10–20 MSPs once their RMP is submitted. Therefore, Bishop Satterlee advises call committees to decide ahead of time to interview every candidate they receive. Time spent discerning whether to interview a candidate is time the candidate may be interviewing in other congregations. Only when a rostered minister agrees that the call committee can recommend them to council and the call committee recommends a candidate to council is the rostered minister expected to withdraw from all other call processes.

Once the call committee chair receives a candidate's RMP from the bishop's office, they should share the candidate's materials with the rest of the call committee so that they can review the RMP and gather specific questions to ask the candidate during the interview process. Remember these profiles only give a snapshot of the candidate, just as the congregation's MSP only gives a snapshot of the congregation. You may wish to review the qualities identified earlier in the process. You can raise questions with the candidate about what you read in their RMP. Do not attempt to answer the question you pose yourself. Do not assume you know what the candidate will say in response. If you have a question, ask!

Sometimes a call committee will have to decide whether to interview more than one candidate. Considering multiple candidates often adds a month to the interviewing process and the Committee risks losing a worthy candidate already interviewed. Bishop Satterlee describes the call process as more of a courtship than a hiring process. The ultimate question is whether a candidate is our next pastor. The question is not how a candidate compares to another candidate, to our last pastor, or to our ideal pastor.

### **Contacting and Preparing to Interviewing Candidates**

As soon as the call committee receives a candidate's materials, the chairperson should contact the candidate by phone or email to let the candidate know: 1) that the committee has their materials; 2) an idea regarding when the candidate can anticipate further contact; 3) the committee's request for additional material from the candidate; and 4) the additional materials that the candidate can expect from the committee.

It is wise to contact the candidate every two weeks throughout the process or the candidate may conclude you are not interested. It is acceptable to let the candidate know you are interviewing others and the candidate may let you know they are interviewing elsewhere. Candidates do not need to disclose either that they are interviewing elsewhere or where they are interviewing. From the initial contact, you are building a relationship with your new pastoral leader even before they actually receive the call.

The call committee interviews candidates as their materials are submitted. Bishop Satterlee encourages call committees to in some way interview every candidate provided. We recommend the initial interview be via Zoom. Some candidates are willing to travel for the initial interview; however, this is no longer an expectation. You can have subsequent Zoom interviews until you are ready to meet face-to-face. The Synod does not schedule or host Zoom interviews for congregations. The call committee will need a Zoom account and someone who knows how to use it.

Interviews should be structured to indicate hospitality to the candidate. It is best if the candidate has a brief biography of each member of the Call Committee and the general questions that will be asked. Ask the candidate how they desire to be addressed and honor their request.

On-site interviews include a general introduction to the community, dinner (hosted by a couple of call committee members), and a two-three hour evening interview. Indications of thoughtfulness and hospitality make a deep impression on candidates. If there is a parsonage, a tour of the parsonage should be included. If the candidate has traveled some distance, the call committee might consider showing the candidate around the community the next morning before the candidate leaves. The congregation is responsible for the costs involved in the interview process. This includes mileage, transportation, car rental, hotel accommodations, and food.

Prepare a packet of information for the candidate and either email or mail it ahead of the interview or have it available when the candidate visits. The packet may include a recent newsletter, a booklet from the most recent history celebration, a visitor booklet for the area, or anything else that demonstrates the character of your congregation and community.

At the conclusion of every interview, tell the candidate your “next step,” when they can expect to hear from you, and how you will contact them. Be true to what you tell them, even if you contact them to say that you are still taking your next step.

You may want to use some basic questions in the interview. Some sample questions are included in Addendum N. Also include specific questions that arise from reading the candidate's RMP. Some congregations provide questions before the interview for the candidate to consider. Candidates appreciate this as an indication of the committee's respect and that they are taking the interview seriously. Some of your questions may arise from the questions the candidate asks the committee. Make sure each member of the committee asks at least one question.

After the initial interview, call committees may desire to have second interviews with the candidate. Eventually, you will want to meet in-person and hear the candidate preach. A lot of pastors post sermon videos on YouTube, but hearing the candidate preach in-person can be more challenging. Since ordained ministers are often serving in congregations, taking a Sunday off for interviews can be difficult. Consider asking the candidate to open the interview with a Bible study or devotion—but be sure to ask this before they arrive.

Interviews should include prayer, time for each member of the call committee to share about themselves, time for the candidate to do the same, the call committee's questions, and time for questions from the candidate. Remember the candidate is discerning whether they are called to this congregation at the same time you are discerning. This is a time to work together in discernment with the candidate.

## Chapter Four: Identifying a Candidate and Congregational Vote

(Call Committee and Congregation Council)

### Identifying the Candidate

When a call committee discerns to call a candidate, the call committee chair notifies the candidate that they are the identified candidate and that the committee desires to recommend them to council for call. Once the candidate accepts this consideration, they must remove their name from any other call processes they are participating in with other congregations. In some cases, the candidate may ask to delay the contact with council until another interview with a congregation is complete. Be sure to clarify when it is agreeable to share the candidate's name with the council. Once the candidate agrees to be recommended to council, the call committee must release any other candidates in the call process. The call committee chair informs other candidates that the call committee has identified a candidate and that they appreciate their discernment with the other candidates.

In conversation with the congregation council, there may be a desire to bring the candidate and their family for a visit. This would be prior to the congregational meeting to vote to call. The pastor may lead worship and preach, or the pastor may lead a Bible Study. A Meet and Greet should be arranged so people can meet the pastor and family. Generally, if the pastor and family visit, the vote would be scheduled for the following weekend, though some congregations schedule a congregational meeting and vote following worship led by the candidate. At the time of the visit, it would be helpful to arrange for the candidate to meet with a realtor and anyone else that would help them begin to settle into the community.

The Statement of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities should be completed and negotiated with the pastor and approved by the bishop's office before the congregational vote (see below). Synod Compensation Guidelines are found at <https://www.mittensynod.org/congregations/resources-for-congregations/>.

### Scheduling the Congregational Meeting and Congregational Vote

It is imperative that the congregation follow the constitution for this vote. Most will require at least two weeks written notice to members. Only those present may vote. There is no voting by proxy. The council prepares and moves two resolutions for the congregation to consider. The congregation should receive materials about the candidate well in advance of the meeting. When the call is to a parish (more than one congregation), each congregation of the parish arranges for its own meeting.

Please inform the bishop's office when the congregational meeting and vote is scheduled so that we can prepare the Letter of Call and send it to you.

#### Resolution One:

"Shall \_\_\_\_\_, of \_\_\_\_\_, be called to serve as pastor/deacon of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church?"

Voting on Resolution One must be completed by written ballot and requires a two-thirds majority for



approval in each congregation

**Resolution Two:**

"Shall the initial annual compensation of the leader be: [an itemized list of compensation]?"

Voting on Resolution Two may be completed by voice vote and requires a simple majority for approval.

If the first resolution fails to be approved, the congregation president contacts the bishop's office for consultation about next steps. The president informs the candidate of the vote by telephone.

Once the vote has been taken, the actual vote is communicated by phone or email to the bishop's office and the candidate is informed. If there was a change made in the compensation or call, the president would also inform the candidate of these changes. It is helpful to begin to have a conversation about when the pastor plans to inform their current congregation and begin at the new call. Public announcements, including social media, should not be made until after the pastor informs their current congregation.

**Letter of Call and Statement of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities**

The Statement of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities should be completed and negotiated with the pastor and approved by the bishop's office before the congregational vote. The Statement of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities is included as an appendix in the Synod Compensation Guidelines, which are available on the Synod's website:

<https://www.mittensynod.org/congregations/resources-for-congregations/>

Health and Pension Benefits are determined through Portico Benefits. Portico provides a website to calculate the total cost of pension, major medical and other benefits:

[https://employerlink.porticobenefits.org/~/\\_link.aspx?id=A8702392AA364983B0C71AEA21F576A7&z=z](https://employerlink.porticobenefits.org/~/_link.aspx?id=A8702392AA364983B0C71AEA21F576A7&z=z) These discussions will be primarily with the congregation president and the candidate. Compensation that is below guidelines will not be approved by the bishop's office.

Once the compensation is agreed upon, the bishop's office will produce the official Letter of Call and mail it to the council president before the day of the congregational vote. The letter will be signed by the president and secretary on that day and mailed back to the bishop's office for the bishop's signature. The bishop's office must also receive the actual vote count and assurance the meeting was held per the congregation's constitution to attest the vote. The bishop's office will mail the original signed Letter of Call to the called pastor, a copy to the congregation, and will retain a copy for synod records.

On the second page of the Statement of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities document, expectations for the first year of the newly called pastor and the congregation are to be specified. It is important to put thought into this as it is completed. Lack of clear expectations can result in misinformation and conflict.

The congregation is expected to cover the cost of the pastor's move. The congregation should ask for at

least three estimates. Some moving companies may provide clergy discounts.

The candidate has thirty (30) days to formally accept the call once they have received the paperwork. Once the candidate has received the paperwork, they sign and return the signed copy of the Statement of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities to the congregation and they keep the Letter of Call. (Note the Letter of Call is utilized in the installation service). This serves as the formal acceptance of the call.

## Chapter Five: Beginning and New Relationship in Mission

(Council)

### **Scheduling the Start Date and Installation Date**

The council president and pastor communicate with the bishop to determine the date for the installation service. The current best practice is to schedule the installation on a Sunday morning at a regular service so that the congregation attends. If the congregation desires to host the installation service at a time when other congregations and clergy can be invited to participate, the best practice is a weeknight (See Addendum P).

Usually, a reception follows. The bishop or the bishop's designee will serve as the installing minister. The installing minister leads the service through the installation. The pastor may begin their ministry with the new congregation prior to the installation date.

If the pastor called is a first call pastor, they will also need to be ordained. In the ELCA, ordination is the responsibility of the synod bishop and Bishop Satterlee expects direct communication with the candidate to determine the appropriate setting and date. Pastors are generally ordained prior to starting at the new congregation and will not administer the sacraments prior to ordination (See Addendum P).

The Ministry Rites for Installation of a Pastor can be found at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Resources/Ministry-Rites.aspx>. You can download the document in a Microsoft Word format and edit as necessary. At the installation service, the call committee should be formally dismissed and thanked (see Addendum O).

### **Acknowledge the Transitional Ministry**

If the congregation has been served by an interim or regular supply pastor, it is helpful to recognize their ministry among you. It is generally recommended that the congregation plans at least one week between the transitional pastor and the new pastor. As with saying goodbye to the previously called pastor, this is a time of saying goodbye and setting the formal boundaries that a new pastor will be serving with the congregation.

### **Transition Team and Mutual Ministry**

As has been previously stated, ministry is about relationships. Getting started in a new place with new people and new expectations, both stated and unstated, is a challenge. Ministry is not only the work of the pastor. Ministry is the work of the church, the mission of the church. According to the constitution, the call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment (C9.05.a).

As the new pastor begins, it is beneficial to ask them what information would be helpful. Things you might consider include where to get a key to the church, where the worship supplies are kept, computer passwords if needed, where council minutes are filed, any upcoming meetings that have been scheduled, a

good place to get coffee, and the list of homebound or persons they should visit early in their ministry.

Some congregations may choose to begin with a Mutual Ministry Committee immediately. However, it might be more beneficial to set up a Transition Team with some members of the Call Committee as the pastor begins ministry in the new place. The Transition Team provides a place for discussing expectations, traditions, questions, unwritten practices, challenges. They may also serve as a team that helps arrange informal gatherings to meet people in the congregation and the community. We recommend the book *Pastor and People* published by Augsburg (ISBN: 9780806646510) for all leaders in the congregation. The book covers setting up and maintaining healthy practices including a Mutual Ministry Committee and Personnel Committee.

### **Conclusion**

Please remember that you are carried in the prayers of your siblings in Christ around this synod and by Bishop Satterlee and the Synod Staff. May the Holy Spirit bless you and guide you as you seek to love God and neighbor.

## Addendum A: Checklist for Transition and Call Process

- Council President contacts the bishop's office when pastor resigns or retires
- Exit Interview is scheduled with the bishop's office within 30 days of pastor's departure
- All end of service forms are completed and submitted
- Farewell and Godspeed service is held on pastor's last Sunday
- Bishop or bishop's designee will preach and preside the Sunday after pastor departs when possible
- Pastoral ministry is secured for the transition period
- Ministry Site Profile is completed and submitted
- Call Committee is formed
- Call Committee attends Call Committee Training
- Candidate paperwork is received
- Candidate is interviewed
- Final Candidate is selected and then approved by Council
- Statement of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities is completed
- Final Candidate visits site
- Congregational vote
- Letter of Call is signed and attested by bishop
- Installation service is planned

## Addendum B: Excerpt from Model Congregation Constitution Chapter 9: Rostered Minister

- \*C9.01.** Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds vote of voting members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected by [this congregation][the Congregation Council] to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.
- \*C9.02.** Only a member of the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament who has been recommended for this congregation by the synod bishop may be called as a pastor of this congregation.
- \*C9.03.** Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
- a. Every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:
    - 1) preach the Word;
    - 2) administer the sacraments;
    - 3) conduct public worship;
    - 4) provide pastoral care;
    - 5) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
    - 6) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through available channels of effective communication;
    - 7) witness to the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; and
    - 8) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations.
  - b. Each pastor with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:
    - 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
    - 2) relate to all schools and organizations of this congregation;
    - 3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council;
    - 4) with the council, administer discipline;
    - 5) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization and of the *(insert name of synod)*; and
    - 6) encourage adherence to covenantal relationship with this church as expressed in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.
- \*C9.04.** The specific duties of the pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor shall be included in a letter of call, which shall be attested by the bishop of the synod.
- \*C9.05.** The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Sacrament and this congregation shall be as follows:
- a. The call of this congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment, which shall be terminated only by the pastor's death or, following consultation with the synod bishop, for any of the following reasons:
    - 1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;

- 2) resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
  - 3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in this congregation in view of local conditions;
  - 4) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in view of disability or incapacity of the pastor;
  - 5) suspension of the pastor through discipline for more than three months;
  - 6) resignation or removal of the pastor from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church;
  - 7) termination of the relationship between this church and this congregation;
  - 8) dissolution of this congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
  - 9) suspension of this congregation through discipline for more than six months.
- b. When allegations of disability or incapacity of the pastor under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,
- 1) the bishop, who has sole discretion, may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson, or
  - 2) when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of this congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson.
- c. In case of alleged disability or incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the pastor's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of this synod may declare the pastorate vacant. When the pastorate is declared vacant, the Synod Council shall list the pastor on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament with disability status. Upon resumption of the ability to conduct the office effectively, the bishop shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call.
- d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of this congregation under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons, after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the pastor and then to this congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address whether the pastor's call should come to an end and, if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by this congregation and by the pastor, if appropriate. If the pastor and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.
- e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the pastor's call, this congregation may dismiss the pastor only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds

vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.

f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above, the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for discipline, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

- \*C9.06.** At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor shall be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.
- \*C9.07.** During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in this congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any rostered minister providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Unless previously agreed upon by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served.
- \*C9.08.** This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation before beginning service in a call to another congregation or employment in another ministry setting.
- \*C9.09.** When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastors, the Congregation Council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.
- \*C9.11.** With the approval of the bishop of the synod, this congregation may depart from \*C9.05.a. and call a pastor for a specific term. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop shall meet with the pastor and representatives of this congregation for a review of the call. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of \*C9.05.a.
- \*C9.12.** The pastor of this congregation:

  - a. shall keep accurate records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from this congregation;
  - b. shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod; and
  - c. shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.
- \*C9.13.** The pastor(s) shall submit a report of ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- \*C9.14.** The records of this congregation shall be maintained by the pastor and shall remain the property of this congregation. The secretary of this congregation shall attest in writing to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in the secretary's hands in good order by a departing pastor before the installation of that pastor in another call or approval of a request for change in roster status.



- C9.15.** Under special circumstances, subject to the approval of the synod bishop and the concurrence of this congregation, a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially has established a relationship of full communion may serve temporarily as pastor of this congregation under a contract between this congregation and the pastor in a form proposed by the synod bishop and approved by this congregation.
- \*C9.21.** Authority to call a deacon shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds vote of voting members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected by [this congregation][the Congregation Council] to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.
- \*C9.22.** Only a member of the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of Ministers of Word and Service who has been recommended for this congregation by the synod bishop may be called as a deacon of this congregation.
- \*C9.23.** Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every minister of Word and Service shall:
- a. Be rooted in the Word of God, for proclamation and service;
  - b. Advocate a prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk-taking and innovative service on the frontiers of the Church's outreach, giving particular attention to the suffering places in God's world;
  - c. Speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations;
  - d. Equip the baptized for ministry in God's world that affirms the gifts of all people;
  - e. Encourage mutual relationships that invite participation and accompaniment of others in God's mission;
  - f. Practice stewardship that respects God's gift of time, talents, and resources;
  - g. Be grounded in a gathered community for ongoing diaconal formation;
  - h. Share knowledge of this church and its wider ministry of the gospel and advocate for the work of all expressions of this church; and
  - i. Identify and encourage qualified persons to prepare for ministry of the gospel.
- \*C9.24.** The specific duties of the deacon, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the deacon shall be included in a letter of call, which shall be attested by the bishop of the synod.
- \*C9.25.** The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Service and this congregation shall be as follows:
- a. The call of this congregation, when accepted by a deacon, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment, which shall be terminated only by the deacon's death or, following consultation with the synod bishop, for any of the following reasons:
    - 1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
    - 2) resignation of the deacon, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
    - 3) inability to conduct the ministry of Word and Service effectively in this congregation in view of local conditions;

- 4) inability to conduct the office effectively in view of disability or incapacity of the deacon;
- 5) suspension of the deacon through discipline for more than three months;
- 6) resignation or removal of the deacon from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church;
- 7) termination of the relationship between this church and this congregation;
- 8) dissolution of this congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
- 9) suspension of this congregation through discipline for more than six months.

b. When allegations of disability or incapacity of the deacon under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the office of minister of Word and Service under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,

- 1) the bishop, who has sole discretion, may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson, or
- 2) when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of this congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson.

c. In case of alleged disability or incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the deacon's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of this synod may declare the position vacant. When the position is declared vacant, the Synod Council shall list the deacon on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service with disability status. Upon resumption of the ability to conduct the office effectively, the bishop shall take steps to enable the deacon to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call.

d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of this congregation under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons, after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the deacon and then to this congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address whether the deacon's call should come to an end and, if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by this congregation and by the deacon, if appropriate. If the deacon and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.

e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the deacon's call, this congregation may dismiss the deacon only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.

f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above,

the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for discipline, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

- \*C9.26.** This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former deacon before calling a successor. A deacon shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation before beginning service in a call to another congregation or employment in another ministry setting.
- \*C9.27.** When a deacon is called to serve in company with another rostered minister or other rostered ministers, the privileges and responsibilities of each rostered minister shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the rostered ministers, the Congregation Council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.
- \*C9.28.** With the approval of the bishop of the synod, this congregation may depart from \*C9.25.a. and call a deacon for a specific term. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop shall meet with the deacon and representatives of this congregation for a review of the call. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of \*C9.25.a.
- \*C9.29.** The deacon shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the deacon shall hold membership in one of the congregations.
- \*C9.31.** The deacon(s) shall submit a report of ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

## Addendum C: Certification of Church Records

### EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD

#### Certification of Church Records

Upon the resignation of a pastor, the following policy of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America applies:

"The parochial records of each congregation shall be kept in a separate book which shall remain its property. The secretary of the congregation shall attest to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his/her hands in good order by a departing pastor before: installation in another field of labor, or the issuance of a certificate of dismissal or transfer." (S14.15)

**Before** the pastor leaves the present field of service, he/she must bring the record books to the secretary of the congregation for review. Upon finding them in good order, the secretary shall complete the form below and forward it to the synod bishop. **This form should be completed within a month of the pastor leaving.**

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

This is to certify that I have examined the parochial records of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church, located in \_\_\_\_\_, and find them to be in good order.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary of the Congregation (Print Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor (Print Name)

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor

Please return to:

North/West Lower Michigan Synod  
PO Box 517  
Dewitt, MI 48820

Addendum D: Certification of Completion of Financial Records

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD**

**Certification of Completion of Financial Records**

Upon the resignation of a pastor, the following policy of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America applies: "The pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former congregation before: installation in other field of labor, or the issuance of a certificate of dismissal or transfer." (S14.16) and "The congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. (C9.08)

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

This is to certify:

That all financial obligations, salary, pension, health, death benefits and allowances, together with continuing education funds have been met and paid to \_\_\_\_\_ up to the effective date of termination of services.

That satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations have been made by \_\_\_\_\_  
to \_\_\_\_\_ (Church), located in \_\_\_\_\_, Michigan.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Treasurer of the Congregation (Print Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor (Print Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Treasurer of the Congregation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor

**In most cases, this form should be completed within a month of the pastor leaving.**

Please return to:

North/West Lower Michigan Synod  
PO Box 517  
Dewitt, MI 48820

## Addendum E: Exit Interview (Option One)

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

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

Introduction, explanation of purpose, outline of the meeting, opening prayer/devotion

- Pastor \_\_\_\_\_, what have been the highlights of your ministry here? (Events/special worship occasions/personal experience, etc.) What will you remember?
- And from you, the current leadership of the congregation, what will stand out in your minds about Pastor \_\_\_\_\_'s ministry among you?
- Describe your pastor using one word or short descriptive phrases.
- Do the same to characterize the personality of this congregation.
- What are the strengths of this congregation?
- What are the weaknesses?
- Pastor \_\_\_\_\_, knowing what you do about the ministry and character of this congregation, what would you do differently if you were just beginning your ministry here? In that regard, what is left undone here? What are the areas of particular need?
- How does this congregation deal with conflict? (Repress/avoid/deny/head-on, etc.)
- Are there any goals/dreams/future hopes that are on the "drawing board" here?
- Is there a parsonage here? If yes, does it need any work/repairs, etc. prior to arrival of next pastor?
- Any other thoughts to be shared?
- The official last Sunday date is: \_\_\_\_\_
- The start-up date in new setting: \_\_\_\_\_

## Addendum F: Exit Interview (Option Two)

Interview Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation/Ministry: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Call: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Sunday: \_\_\_\_\_ Last day: \_\_\_\_\_ Start date for new call: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Ministry: \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Associate/Assistant Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_ Specialized Ministry: \_\_\_\_\_

- Assessment of the congregation when pastor arrived:
- Now when pastor is leaving: How has the congregation changed during pastor's tenure?
- For the pastor: What have been your greatest accomplishments and satisfactions?
- For the pastor: What frustrations have you had? What has blocked your effectiveness? What are the congregation's greatest weaknesses?
- What are the congregation's greatest strengths?
- What ministry goals for the congregation seem most important for the next 5 years?
- For the pastor: Describe the reason(s) you are leaving your current call.
- For the pastor: If call was associate/assistant or to specialized ministry: What changes would you suggest be made in the current position description?
- For the pastor: What would you like to see changed within the synod?
- For the pastor: If leaving the synod: If the opportunity presented itself, would you be interested in returning to the synod?

## Addendum G: Pastoral Ethics: Pastors and Rostered Ministers Relating to Previously Served Parishes

When a pastor accepts a call to a congregation, a sacred covenant is established between that pastor and the people of God in that place. In order that the ministry might be strong and effective, it is important for that relationship to be strengthened and nurtured until God calls that pastor to another sector of ministry. When a pastor resigns or retires, that covenant ends. How does a pastor relate appropriately to members of congregations where one has previously served? The following best practices give guidance to healthy faithful practices that have positive rather than negative impact with the congregation.

### **When the pastor accepts another call:**

- a. It is the responsibility of the former pastor to decline invitations to conduct pastoral acts in any former parish. It is important that the burden of such decisions does not fall back to the pastor who currently holds that call. As professional people, we commit ourselves to act responsibly in these matters. For the sake of the church and the ongoing ministry of the congregation, "Do to others as you would have them do to you." When we do that, our relating to members of previous parishes can be used by God to build up the body of Christ.
- b. It is the responsibility of the former pastor to be supportive of the successor, even when that is difficult to do. The responsibility for the success of the current pastor is also part of the former pastor's responsibility. If it is not possible to be supportive of that pastor's ministry, it is extremely important to cut off contact with members of that congregation, in order not to become a hindrance to its ministry.
- c. While the above statements are addressed to pastors, spouses of pastors must consider the same factors and also respect the recommendations made above. Spouses share a pastoral identity and, as a result, can become hindrances as easily as a pastor can.

### **When the pastor retires:**

1. Meet with the bishop well in advance to discuss your decision.
2. Whenever possible, plan retirement so that you will not be retiring in the parish where you have served as pastor.
3. If considering remaining in the same community, or moving to a former community, please consult with the bishop before any firm decisions are made. A covenant will be written in conversation with the bishop, the congregation, and the rostered minister.
4. Consider retirement as a "call to the ministry of the baptized." Retirement does not mean being uninvolved as an active church member; it means to be involved in ministry as we have encouraged members to be involved throughout our ministries. Belonging to the same congregation that one served as pastor may not allow the former pastor to function actively without creating problems for the congregation, which now has a covenant with a new pastor. Therefore, if there is any other ELCA congregation within commuting distance, transfer to that one.
5. If you decide to live where you had served as a pastor, recognize that this may become the focus of difficulty in that setting. As you prepare to leave, declare the new relationship to members of the congregation. Visit in depth with the new pastor who has been called to the parish, so the pastor



can be assured that your presence will not be a hindrance, and that you will do everything possible to be of support and help. Ongoing communication within the pastorate is absolutely essential. "Do to others as you would want them to do to you" is the guiding principle.

6. It is the responsibility of the former pastor to decline invitations to conduct pastoral acts in any former parish. It is important that you say "no," rather than, "I'll come if the current pastor says okay."
7. While the above statements are addressed to pastors, spouses of pastors must consider the same factors and also respect the above recommendations. Spouses share a pastoral identity and, as a result, can become hindrances as easily as a pastor can.
8. It is the responsibility as a former pastor to be supportive of your successor, even when that is difficult to do. If it is not possible to be supportive of the pastor's ministry, it is extremely important that you remove yourself from that congregation, in order to not become a hindrance to its ministry.

This guideline on pastoral ethics is shared for the sake of the Church and the ongoing ministry of the congregation, to enable us to act wisely in difficult circumstances. It is provided to help rostered ministers and congregations understand S14.14 of the Synod Constitution:

S14.14 Ordained ministers shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council.

Adopted by the Synod Council of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod September 2012.

## Addendum H: Covenant for Departing Pastors

It has been my privilege to serve the mission and ministry of \_\_\_\_\_ Church as Pastor during these past \_\_\_\_\_ months/years. As God called me for a time to serve among you, God now calls me forth to serve in a new way, in a new place among a new people though still one in the body of Christ.

In prayerful conversation with the Congregation Council of \_\_\_\_\_, I have discussed the policies and expectations of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and I enter into the following covenant.

I agree:

to pray for the ongoing mission of the congregation and for their new pastor;  
to communicate to the congregation, in writing and in conversation, the terms of the covenant, which terminates this pastoral relationship;  
to not be involved in any leadership or advisory role (public or private) in this congregation and to refrain from behaviors that seek in any way to control the transition process, including any attempt to influence the choice of a successor;  
to refrain from language or behavior that could undermine the development of the relationship between the congregation and a new pastor (temporary or successor);  
to not support or give advice to anyone involved in a congregational disagreement;  
to refuse requests for pastoral services made by members of the congregation, including baptisms, weddings, funerals, anniversaries, visiting the sick and homebound;  
to consult with the current pastor regarding my attendance at worship and special events;  
to encourage my family members to support me in maintaining this covenant and to support the ministry of the congregation's new pastor.

*(Other items may be added that are consistent with the particular relationship and mission of this congregation.)*

It is understood that this covenant does not affect or require termination of friendships with individuals who are members of this congregation.

Signature of Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witnessed by President (Vice-President): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

After sharing this covenant with the congregation, please mail a copy of the completed and signed document to the office of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod:

P.O. Box 517

Dewitt, MI 48820

## Addendum I: A Theology of Call

In the waters of baptism the Triune God promises us eternal life and forgives all of our sins. God names us beloved children and claims us as God's very own, sealing us with the Holy Spirit and marking us with the cross of Christ forever. Through these baptismal waters Christ initiates each one into the Church, which is the body of Christ, and sets every newborn Christian apart to share in Christ's own ministry as a member of the priesthood of all believers. As we live in Christian community, the Holy Spirit nurtures us in our baptismal vocation through Word and Sacrament, equips us to carry out the ministry to which God calls us, and sends us in service as ambassadors for Christ in and to the world.

Most Christians too easily lose their baptismal identity and vocation in the busyness and responsibilities of daily life in the world. However, God promises that the mark of the cross and the power of the Holy Spirit will be with all who are baptized, no matter where they go and what they do.

The majority of Christians live out their baptismal vocation within vocations found in the midst of the world. They carry out their ministry while living and working in an almost limitless variety of life situations and professions. In Christ, the faithful are more than doctors, farmers, students, teachers, shopkeepers, children and parents who come to church. They are ministers in Jesus's name who engage the world as doctors, farmers, teachers, shopkeepers, children and parents. As they serve God and each other in their life together within the church, they also represent Christ and the church as they work in the context of a pluralistic and heavily secular world. This calling to vocation within the world is one of the key ways that the baptized participate in Christ's own work of reconciling the world to God's very Self.

To nurture and empower the baptized, God calls some Christians as Ministers of Word and Sacrament (Pastors) to ensure that the gospel is faithfully preached and the sacraments rightly administered in the Church. God also calls Ministers of Word and Service (Deacons) to keep the world, which God loves and for which Christ suffered and died, ever before the Church. Rostered ministry is not better or higher than the ministry of the baptized. Rather, rostered ministers play a circumscribed but essential role in nurturing and empowering the ministry of the baptized.

The church as Christ's body of all the baptized is bigger than the single ministry to which individuals belong. Through partnership with synods and churchwide structures, training and the formation of leaders can happen in a way that can shape the church to be faithful and effective in the mission God entrusts to it. Partnership in the call process embodies this reality and ensures greater depth and accountability for this work. The process of calling rostered ministers within the life of the church is therefore primarily about discerning God's will for and God's call upon the congregation or ministry in which they will serve. Prayerfully, congregations, in partnership with the synod and greater church, call forth those they believe God can best use to help them carry out their mission together.

Rostered ministry is not a self-called vocation but a unique calling from God through the church. Rostered ministry is a means by which God serves and equips the whole people of God so that the church can live

together in the peace and harmony of Christ, equip the baptized for their work, serve faithfully as the body of Christ in the world, and participate in Christ's own work of reconciling the world to God's very Self.

Bishop Satterlee finds it helpful to think of the calling of a pastor or deacon as a three legged stool. All three legs are necessary or the stool collapses. First, the ELCA, through the synod and bishop, determines that a candidate is qualified and appropriate. Second, the congregation, through the call process and a congregational vote, calls a particular candidate to be their pastor or deacon. The bishop signs the letter of call to attest that a proper call process and vote has been followed. Third, the candidate, believing God is calling them to this congregation, accepts the congregation's call. All three must be in place for shared ministry to begin.

In reflecting on the calling of a pastor or deacon, ask:

- As a baptized person, how is your calling being fulfilled in your daily life?
- In your experience, how has your congregation equipped you to do that?
- How does reflecting about your vocational calling affect your thinking as you prepare to call a pastor or deacon?
- How is calling a rostered minister in the church different than hiring someone in a secular position?
- How will your congregation support the rostered minister you are seeking to work for the whole church, not just your particular ministry?

## Addendum J: Qualities and Gifts for Public Ministry

What do you believe is essential for a public pastoral leader? Spend some time talking about what are the essential qualities for the pastoral leader at your congregation.

- **Faithfulness:** Biblical, Personal Depth, Committed to Church, Abiding in Jesus, Witnessing, Spiritually Disciplined, Genuine, Believer, Integrated, Living Jesus' Grace
- **Leadership:** Giftedness, Spiritual, Creative, Empowering, Courageous, Equipping Others, Responsible, Visionary, Awareness of One's Style, Practiced, People Skills, Willingness, Servanthood, Humility, Sense of Privilege in Serving, Selflessness
- **Love:** For the Lord, For the Church, Church Peopleship, Devotion, Passionate for God and God's Kingdom, For the Gospel, Relationally Oriented to People and World, Collegiality, Compassion, Caring for People, Fresh and Passionate, A Pastor's Heart, Hospitality, Empathy, Vulnerability
- **Sense of Call:** Flexibility, Understanding, Clear, Inner and Outer Senses of Call, Desire to Learn, As a Way of Life, Sense of Mission, Curiosity, Life-long Learner, Sense of Transformation, Sense of Re-formation, Teachability, Open to Change and Self-Discovery, Listener
- **Integrity:** Genuine, Authentic, Transparent, Self-Differentiated, Self-Aware, Character, Honesty, Trustworthiness, Spiritually, Emotionally, Mentally Healthy, Sense of Humor, Self-Care
- **Competence:** Biblically Literate, Academic Ability, Biblical and Theological, Sense of Context, Vision, Balance of Law and Gospel, Both Therapeutic and Prophetic, Articulate Grace, Intelligent, Common Sense, Wisdom
- **Grounded:** Spirituality, ELCA/Lutheran Identity, Balanced Life, Integrated Theology and Practice, Ability to Live in Dialectical Tension/Paradox/Ambiguity, Spiritual Depth, Graced and Know It

This list of essential qualities was compiled from characteristics identified in 11 candidacy consultations held throughout the ELCA with synod and seminary candidacy leaders.

## Addendum K: Best Practice Checklist for First Call Congregations

Vocation of First Call Congregations Project, 2010

A checklist of ideas that can enhance and sustain best practices in congregations related to beginning a first call in public ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

- The first call congregation claims its vocation as a "teaching" and "mentoring" context for a new leader in public ministry.
- The call process includes attention to what is unique about calling a rostered minister into a first call.
- The call committee uses available resources in understanding a call to a first call leader.
- The congregation is intentional in providing a healthy, safe environment for a new leader to shape their ministerial identity.
- The congregation honors and welcomes the gifts of its new pastor or deacon.
- The congregation invites the new leader to join members in reflecting on its identity and mission as a community of faith.
- The congregation is open to and makes connections with its larger community.
- The congregation's goals and actions reflect flexibility and openness to change.
- The congregation addresses financial realities in positive, hopeful ways, especially during the call process.
- A sense of possibility and hope for the future is reflected in behaviors and decision-making by the leadership.
- Leaders are intentional in visioning and planning for mission.
- The call committee serves as or arranges for a mutual ministry committee in the first years of a first call ministry.
- Members are respectful of the needed boundaries between the new leader's personal/family life and congregational leadership.
- The congregation members and new leader appreciate each other and enjoy serving together.
- The congregation pays special attention to hospitality, making the new leader feel welcome and cared for during the months of transition into the first call and into the broader community.

## Addendum L: Possible Bible Study/Devotions

One method of Bible study and Reflection is known as *Lectio Divina*, which is Latin for “divine reading.” The intent is to let go of our own agenda and open our hearts and minds to where God is leading. There are many ways people will practice *Lectio Divina*, below is one way. Any text may be used for this, but the suggested texts included below may be especially relevant to the work of the Call Process.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, we look to your Word for guidance and hope. Open our hearts and our minds that we may hear your word for us. Guide us through your word to hear the good news for our lives together through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

One person reads the lesson.

In one minute of silence, reflect or write one word or phrase from the lesson that seems significant. Each person shares the word or phrase without additional comment.

A second person reads the lesson.

In two minutes of silence reflect on what this passage is saying to you. Each person may share their reflection without additional comment.

A third person reads the lesson.

In three minutes of silence, reflect what this passage is saying to the congregation at this time while you are in the Call Process.

Each person may share their reflection in one sentence or less.

Suggested Texts: You may also consider individuals choosing a favorite text or use the text from worship.

- Matthew 28: 16-20 – The Great Commission
- Matthew 9:9-13 – The Call of Matthew
- Luke 5: 1-11 – Call of the Fishermen
- John 1:35-46 – Calling the First Disciples
- John 12:20-26 – Jesus Predicts his Death
- Acts 2:1-13 – Holy Spirit and Pentecost
- Acts 2:42-47 – The Fellowship of Believers
- Acts 6:1-7 – The Choosing of Seven Priests
- Romans 5:1-11 – Reconciliation
- Romans 12: 1-8 – Be a Living Sacrifice
- Romans 12:9-21 – Love and Good
- I Corinthians 3:1-9 – Fellow Workers
- 2 Corinthians 4:1-12 – Treasure in Clay Jars
- Ephesians 4:(1-13)14-16 – Unity and Truth
- Philippians 2: 1-11 – The Christ Hymn
- 1 Timothy 3:1-13 – Qualifications of Bishops and Deacons
- 1 Timothy 4:6-16 – Instructions to Timothy

## Addendum M: Satterlee Survey—Call Process Expectations

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

<b>Call Process</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Call a Pastor</b>
Some congregations/call committees have set expectations of the call process that must be met before they can call a pastor. Other congregations/call committees are willing to modify the call process to facilitate calling a pastor.						
<b>Set Expectations of the Pastor</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Surprised by the Holy Spirit</b>
Some congregations/call committees have set expectations of their next pastor. Other congregations/call committees expect to be surprised by the Holy Spirit as they call their next pastor.						
<b>Comfortably Affordable</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Best Match</b>
Some congregations/call committees seek a pastor they can comfortably afford and understand they will need to compromise other expectations to find one. Other congregations/call committees seek the best match and are willing to stretch themselves financially to afford that pastor.						
<b>Traits</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Skills</b>
Some congregations/call committees are more concerned with a pastor's traits (gender, age, family, etc.). Other congregations/call committees are more concerned with the pastor's skills (preaching, teaching, visiting, etc.).						
<b>Engage the Community</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Care for Members of the Congregation</b>
Some congregations/call committees expect the pastor's primary work is to share the gospel by engaging the community and neighborhood; other congregations/call committees expect the pastor's primary work is to care for members of the congregation.						
<b>Preserve Congregation As It Is</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Lead Congregation to Become Something New</b>
While all congregations want to grow, some want to preserve the congregation as it is; others understand that growth requires becoming something new.						
<b>Protect Independence</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Facilitate Cooperation</b>
Some congregations seek a pastor that protects them as completely independent. Other congregations seek a pastor that facilitates their cooperation with other congregations.						
<b>Rank the following in terms of importance:</b>						
____ Building	____ Congregation as Community	____ Mission Specify:	____ Other Specify:			
<b>Provide 1-3 sentences Bishop Satterlee can share with potential pastoral candidates about why they should consider a call to your congregation:</b>						



## Addendum N: Pastoral Interview Guide

Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

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

### Personal Motivation:

- Describe some of your most important accomplishments.
- How did you go about reaching your goals?
- What outside interests or hobbies do you enjoy?

### Building Body Cohesiveness

- Describe how you would help new members become part of the congregation.
- From your experience, can you tell us of a time when you confronted a person or a group of people who were undermining the unity of the church. How did you resolve this?

### Commitment to Church Growth

- How much time and effort do you put into accomplishing your ministry?

### Visioning Capacity

- Describe a situation that was stagnate or failing and describe how you took action to revitalize it.

### Responsiveness to Community

- How important to you is your visibility in the community?
- Describe how you might contribute to the quality of life in our community.

### Creating Ownership of Ministry

- Tell us about techniques you might use to recruit members to carry out areas of ministry of the congregation.
- What ideas do you have to stimulate the congregation to do outreach?

### Gift Utilization

- How do you recognize talents in others and motivate them to use their gifts.

### Relationship Building

- What steps do you take to help others feel secure, trusted, and open with you?
- Describe a relationship you have had or initiated with a person who is radically different from yourself or holds very different beliefs.

### Flexibility

- How do you see that your work gets completed when it is disrupted by emergencies or other unforeseen circumstances?

### Reaching the Unchurched

- Describe ways that you typically associate with unchurched people in your community.
- What guidance or training could you provide to members who seek to reach unchurched

persons?

#### Resilience

- When pressure mounts, how do you maintain your cool in ministry?
- How did you survive when a defeat or failure got the best of you?

#### Demonstrating Strong Christian Faith

- How do you go about describing your personal faith with your members?
- How do you help others with faith issues? For example, describe techniques you might use to counsel those who have suffered a loss and are having trouble with issues of faith.
- In what ways have you paid a price for your Christian faith? What can you do to help others understand the cost of discipleship?

#### Developing Faith Formation

- How would you help people understand that there are varying stages of development of faith?
- How could you provide opportunities to people to grow in their faith?

#### Multicultural Ministry

- Describe how you have assigned a group of people to work together toward a common goal, despite their differences.
- Describe how you have helped persons of varying cultures look through another's eyes at a situation.

#### Commitment to the ELCA

- Describe how a congregation should participate in the ministry of the ELCA.
- Describe your special interests for National or World ministry.
- What concerns you most about the ELCA?

#### Youth

- What is your comfort level with children in general, and how so you see your role as Pastor in providing leadership in their spiritual and social growth?
- Would you encourage the children and youth of our congregation to come to you for help and/or counsel with their problems or concerns? Would you value their input and consider their ideas?
- We have some very good leadership for children at St. John, and understand from your comments that you do not wish to become a "youth pastor". We realize that young families and children are a very important part of our ministry. How would you work with our Sunday School and youth leaders to strengthen that ministry?
- Occasional children's sermons and regular youth participation have been part of our Sunday morning worship. What is your view on this?

#### Music

- Our music program is functioning well, staffed with nonprofessionals. What would your expectations be for a music program?

## Addendum O: Commendation/Dismissal of Call Committee

**Vice President of Congregation/President of Congregation:** Now that the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of newly installed pastor*) is installed as Pastor of \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of congregation*) Lutheran Church, we take a moment to release the Call Committee from their Charge. Today it is our privilege to give thanks for the Call Committee as they have completed their time of service. Would the call committee members, please come forward?

**Pastor:** Following prayerful discernment of this congregation, the Holy Spirit summoned you to serve as members of the Call Committee. You were charged in this service to prayerfully gather together, seeking guidance by the Spirit as you studied, reviewed, engaged in conversation with pastoral candidates and make a recommendation to the congregation council. Your journey was not without moments of frustrations and disappointments as well as self-discoveries and celebrations. Through it all you remained faithful in your charge and trusted in God's wisdom and direction. With thanks and praise, God has brought you and the members of \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of congregation*) Lutheran Church to a successful conclusion of your charge.

Let us pray. "Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. We give thanks for the ways these gifts have been shown forth among us through your servants, \_\_\_\_\_ (*names of call committee members*). We praise you for shared joys and accomplishments, and we commend our work to you. Grant that we may continue to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen." (*Sundays and Seasons' Occasions in Church Life*)

**Vice President of Congregation/President of Congregation:** As the president (vice-President) of \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of congregation*), and on behalf of the congregation, I now release you from your charge as the Call Committee and commend you for your faithful work. Well, done good and faithful servants! Please join me in offering our thanks for their time and dedication.

## Addendum P: Policies for Ordination and Installation

### Ordination

From the *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, page 9. For Ministers of Word and Service, see page 53.

#### B. Bishop authorization of ordination

The bishop with the power to authorize an ordination is **the bishop of the synod in which a candidate has accepted a call**. That bishop authorizes the ordination, even if the candidate comes from another synod and may have been approved by the multi-synod or synod Candidacy Committee of another synod.

- 1) **Power to ordain:** According to †S8.12.c. and f. in the *Constitution for Synods*, the bishop of a synod is to: “Exercise solely this church’s power to ordain (or provide for the ordination by another synod bishop of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament;” and “Install (or provide for the installation of)” such pastors.
- 2) **Jurisdiction:** In receiving and accepting a valid call, the candidate comes under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the synod in which the call was issued. That bishop, on the basis of the record of such a valid call, authorizes the ordination, even if the ordination is to take place on the territory of another synod.
- 3) **Planning of ordination:** If the ordination is to occur on the territory of another synod (*e.g.*, at a candidate’s home congregation), the bishop who authorizes the ordination shall consult with the bishop of the synod on whose territory the ordination may be held **prior to** approving any plans for such an ordination.
  - a) **No candidate shall make plans for ordination prior to consultation with the synod bishop under whose authority the candidate is to be ordained.**
  - b) If an ordination is planned on the territory of another synod, **the patterns and practices of the synod of jurisdiction shall prevail**. No ordination is to be scheduled without the prior approval of the bishop on whose territory the rite is to occur.
- 4) **Signing the certificate of ordination:** The bishop authorizing the ordination shall be the bishop who signs the certificate of ordination.

#### Commentary:

Bishop Satterlee will have a primary and integral role in scheduling and planning ordinations. Candidates for ordination should contact Bishop Satterlee shortly after accepting a Letter of Call. The timing and location of ordinations will depend on the bishop’s availability and schedule. Bishop Satterlee attempts to honor the ordinand’s desires and preferences; however, he retains final decisions in ordinations.

Bishop Satterlee typically leads the presiding minister portions of the entire liturgy. He welcomes the ordinand inviting a mentor to preach and others to serve as assisting ministers. When ordination and installation occur in the same service, it is appropriate for the newly ordained and installed pastor to preside at Holy Communion. For guidance on planning the service in preparing for conversation with Bishop Satterlee, read the Customary for Visits from the Bishop and Assistant to the Bishops: <https://www.mittensynod.org/congregations/resources-for-congregations/>

## Installation

**According to ¶S8.12.c. in the *Constitution for Synods*, the bishop of a synod is to: “Install (or provide for the installation of)” rostered ministers whose calls the bishop has attested.”**

Bishop Satterlee prefers to install pastors and deacons himself. If this is not possible, Bishop Satterlee authorizes an Assistant to the Bishop. If one is not available, Bishop Satterlee authorizes the dean of the conference the congregation is located in since they serve as an extension of the Office of the Bishop.

The scheduling of the installation will depend upon the synod staff's availability and schedule. The congregation president or newly called pastor should contact Bishop Satterlee shortly after accepting the Letter of Call to schedule and begin planning for the installation. In consultation with the conference deans, our practice is to hold installations either as part of Sunday morning worship, or on a weeknight.

In accordance with the service of installation, Bishop Satterlee (or the authorized installing minister) leads the presiding minister parts of the service through the installation. The newly installed pastor then assumes the presiding minister role. Bishop Satterlee (or the authorized installing minister) preaches. Other pastors may serve as assisting ministers.

For guidance on planning the worship service, consult the Customary for Visits from the Bishop and Assistant to the Bishops: <https://www.mittensynod.org/congregations/resources-for-congregations/>.