



**Indiana-Kentucky Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

## A GUIDE FOR ROSTERED MINISTRY LEADERSHIP TRANSITION IN CONGREGATIONS

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The procedures outlined in this manual are intended to assist congregations in the task of calling a pastor/deacon. The calling of a pastor/deacon is a special time for reflection and prayer in the life of a congregation. During this transition, Council leadership of the congregation should encourage strong bonds of unity and trust in God, while exercising sensitive care for all the people of the congregation. This transition is a time of self-discovery, decision making, and looking ahead to the future.

We believe it is our Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, who guides the call process of a pastor/deacon to be in a mutual ministry with the members of a congregation. This process also represents a valuable partnership between God, the calling congregation and the Indiana-Kentucky Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The Indiana-Kentucky Synod staff and other appointed leaders will be available to work with the congregation during the time of transition. An ideal call process builds on trust, openness, and good communication. When the call process results in a good match between pastor/deacon and congregation, the total mission of the church is furthered.

When the pastor/deacon resigns, or retires, the primary anxiety for many congregations is to find a new pastor/deacon quickly. No one can guarantee how long the call process will take, and several factors play a role in the length of the transition:

- .....the time it takes to grieve the pastor/deacon who has left  
*healthy grieving helps us to let go of the past and let go of the pastor/deacon so we can welcome God's future*
- .....the presence of an interim  
*interims provide sound care and leadership, giving the congregation the freedom to move through the process in a measured manner*
- .....the availability of pastors/deacons  
*pastors/deacons are always available, but congregations will want the one with the right gifts and core values that fit the congregation well*
- .....the time for self-study and preparing of the Ministry Site Profile  
*this doesn't have to take a long time, but should be done well, giving the congregation the proper amount of time to become acquainted with or to discover anew its mission and purpose*

The bishop and assistants to the bishop will encourage the congregation not to hurry the process of calling a new pastor/deacon. The time between the leaving of one pastor/deacon and the arrival of another is a time for God's Spirit to work, and provides the congregation with a valuable opportunity to reassess its mission and to possibly reorder its ministry for the future.

This handbook is specifically and primarily meant for the Congregation Council Chair, but some material is for use by the Call Committee as well.

## CHECKLIST OF STEPS IN THE MINISTRY CALL PROCESS

### Step 1: Closure

- \_\_\_\_\_ Accept the resignation of your pastor/deacon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Notify the congregation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact the office of the synodical Bishop to begin the transition process and arrange for the Bishop's transition visit with the departing pastor/deacon and Council.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be in conversation with the synod office about a Pastor of Record assignment or the availability of an interim pastor/deacon if that is desired by the congregation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Plan significant congregational events for the departing pastor/deacon.

## **Step 1: Closure**

### **THE RESIGNATION OF THE PASTOR/DEACON**

Most often, the resignation of the pastor/deacon comes as a surprise. Usually, it is an unwanted surprise because the pastor/deacon is well liked and has provided an effective ministry. Occasionally, it can be a welcomed announcement. There can be situations where the relationship between pastor/deacon and congregation has deteriorated with none of the parties able to deal with the problem openly. Sometimes there have been signs pointing to the imminent end of the ministry relationship.

Whatever the circumstances, this time of transition can be one of the most significant periods in the life of a congregation. From the moment of the announcement of resignation until the arrival of the new pastor/deacon, key congregational lay leaders must perform at their best. This is a time when the depth of each member's relationship to God, their commitment to one another as a community of faith, and their engagement in God's mission in the world play vital roles. Once the pastor/deacon has submitted their resignation, don't try to reverse the decision or debate or argue with the pastor/deacon.

### **THE BISHOP'S VISIT**

The Bishop will conduct a visit with the congregation council and the departing pastor/deacon. It is a time for debriefing, for providing information which will be helpful for the synod staff and the congregation in the calling of a new pastor/deacon, for clarifying the relationship the departing pastor/deacon will have with the congregation after leaving, and to begin turning toward God's future for the congregation.

The visit can be informal and lighthearted while also being frank and substantial. The Bishop's visit may include questions such as the following:

1. What are your joys and concerns as a congregation?
2. What do you think God's concerns are in this place and in your community?
3. In what ways do you see God at work in and through this congregation and community?
4. What do you see as the strengths and the weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of this congregation?
5. How can the synod office walk with you during this transition time?

It is important at this time to clarify the relationship the departing pastor/deacon will have with the congregation after he or she has departed. From the Indiana-Kentucky 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.

Normally it is agreed that the pastor/deacon **will not return** to the congregation to provide ministry services, except in those instances in which a succeeding pastor/deacon extends an invitation to do so. It is assumed that there will be a period of at least one year in which there will be no contact with the departing pastor/deacon. The Bishop's office will provide resources to assist the pastor/deacon and congregation in parting well.

### BIDDING YOUR PASTOR/DEACON FAREWELL

It is wise to establish a special relationship with the departing pastor/deacon. This begins with formal acceptance of the resignation, but it goes far beyond that. A person or group should be responsible for working with the pastor/deacon on the use of remaining time. What will be the significant events that lead up to the actual departure? What events will be planned to honor and thank the departing pastor/deacon and the pastor/deacon's family?

It is often difficult to say good-bye to a person with whom one has been intimately associated. Feelings of bereavement, sorrow, loneliness, relief, guilt and confusion can be present. Many congregations plan a dinner or celebration in honor of the departing pastor/deacon. A slide show or video of congregational events, especially if done with a sense of appreciative humor, may be appropriate entertainment. Often members write testimonials which are bound in a book and presented at this time. Most congregations present a gift to the departing pastor/deacon and family.

Before the pastor/deacon leaves, all-important congregational papers and records must be located and inventoried. An audit form is provided by the synod for this purpose. The synod or conference dean will assist as you and the pastor/deacon work to bring all records up to date. Here is a checklist of items to consider:

- a. Records of membership, baptisms, confirmations, marriages, births, funerals, transfers, communions, and contributions;
- b. Annual Congregational Report Forms (parochial reports) and recent annual congregational meeting reports and minutes;
- c. Prospective members list;
- d. Pastoral care situations that need special attention including sick and shut-in member needs;
- e. Obligations that are yet to be fulfilled; and
- f. Financial responsibilities between pastor/deacon and parish

After the pastor/deacon leaves, it is helpful to occasionally insert a message in the worship bulletin or congregational newsletter similar to this: *"While Pastor/Deacon Anderson is still a pastor/deacon, he/she is no longer our pastor. We love and cherish the friendship we have had, but should not ask for further ministry services such as counseling, baptisms, and weddings. If you are in need of pastoral service, please contact (name, phone number), who is our pastor of record or interim pastor."*

## DURING THE TRANSITION

During the time of pastoral transition, the congregation may be served by a **Pastor of Record** or an **Interim Pastor**. The **Pastor of Record** is appointed by the bishop or synod staff member, and is normally the pastor of a neighboring ELCA congregation. The Pastor of Record is required to be in attendance at all council and congregational meetings during the vacancy (as their schedule allows), and is available for such things as hospital calls, crisis situations, funerals, etc. The recommended reimbursement is \$300.00 a month plus mileage, with the rate negotiable if more extensive services are required by the congregation. In a multi-point parish, the reimbursement rate is received from **each congregation** served by the Pastor of Record.

When a Pastor of Record is used, **pulpit supply** must be secured by the congregation during the transition. The Synod provides a Pulpit Supply List on the synod web site ([www.iksynod.org](http://www.iksynod.org)). Pulpit supply leaders should be contacted well in advance, and provided with a worship bulletin and pertinent information about the service. The recommended honorarium for one worship service is \$150.00 plus round-trip mileage and additional compensation for added responsibilities. For additional services (whether at one congregation, or at two, as in the case of two-point parishes), an amount of \$50.00 per additional service should be paid.

An **Interim Pastor (or Deacon)** is appointed by the Bishop, to serve a congregation either on a part-time or full-time basis during the time of transition. The length of time of the interim, the responsibilities of the interim, and remuneration will be negotiated with the Congregation Council. The interim will begin following the completion of the Interim Ministry Contract, (contracts are available through the IK Synod office), and its review and acceptance by the Bishop.

An **Interim Pastor** provides stability and cohesiveness to the ministry of the congregation during the period of transition. An interim preaches and presides at the liturgies of the parish and is present during the week to help support and lead the ministries of the congregation. If an interim is desired, but one is not available as soon as the transition period begins, the Pastor of Record serves until the beginning of the interim's contracted time of service.

**Step 2: Selection**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Understand the role of the Synodical Bishop.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Arrange for Exploring God’s Expectations Workshop
- \_\_\_\_\_ Determine the Call Committee membership and function.  
Agree on some basic understandings of polity, confidentiality, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Become acquainted with compensation range and guidelines.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Become familiar with the personnel data forms.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Become familiar with the ELCA “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline” document and the constitutional provisions on rostered ministers of the ELCA.  
<https://www.elca.org/Resources/Office-of-the-Secretary#Governance>
- \_\_\_\_\_ Determine the format and agenda for interviewing the candidate(s).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Receive name(s) of candidate(s) to be interviewed from the Bishop’s office.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule the interview(s).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Select one candidate as “primary candidate.”

## Step 2: Selection

### THE ROLE OF THE SYNODICAL BISHOP IN THE CALL PROCESS

In the ELCA, constitutional provisions and common practice dictate a pastoral relationship of synod bishops with ordained ministers and congregations. The Synod Constitution, Chapter 14, describes this:

- †S14.16.a. Each congregation of this synod shall consult the bishop of this synod before taking any steps leading to the extending of a call to a prospective pastor.
- S14.17. No minister of Word and Sacrament shall accept a call without first conferring with the bishop of this synod.
- †S14.41.a. Each congregation of this synod shall consult the bishop of this synod before taking any steps leading to the extending of a call to a prospective minister of Word and Service.
- S14.42. No minister of Word and Service shall accept a call without first conferring with the bishop of this synod.

The role of the synodical bishop in the call process, along with the synod staff and other persons, is to walk with the congregation throughout the call process, to provide support through prayer and counsel, to recommend an appropriate candidate or candidates to the congregation, to provide for a person to conduct the Call Meeting, and to sign the Letter of Call. At the time of the recommendation, the bishop or the synod staff will share pertinent information with the Call Committee regarding the candidate(s).

### EXPLORING GOD'S EXPECTATIONS WORKSHOP

Exploring God's Expectations is a workshop led by the Director for Evangelical Mission or another facilitator. This workshop helps congregations explore and identify their programs, giftedness and assets, partnerships, context, core values, engagement in the community, and their purpose. As the congregation clarifies its identity, members also begin to envision who God is calling them to be in the next chapter of their life. During the workshop the congregation will also discover ways they can continue to engage in vital ministry during this time of ministry leadership transition. By participating in the Exploring God's Expectations Workshop, your congregation and its Call Committee will also be equipped to fill out the Congregation Profile, hold productive conversations with candidates, and call a pastor/deacon who shares your vision of mission and ministry.

### THE FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF A CALL COMMITTEE

After the Exploring God's Expectations Workshop, when the Congregation Council believes that the congregation is clear about its identity and mission, the congregation will form a Call Committee. The constitution governing your congregation will provide for either the appointment or the election of a Call Committee. This is determined by reading

- ❖ \*C5.03.j., to see if the congregation elects its committees or not;
  - ❖ \*C9.01., if not elected by the congregation then by the Congregation Council; and
  - ❖ C13.05., for the make-up and membership of the Committee.
- (Chapters and sections are as found in the Model Constitution)*



Because of additional demands during a pastor/deacon transition, it is recommended that the chair of the Council not be the chair of the Call Committee.

The composition of the Call Committee should intentionally reflect the makeup of the congregation, assuring that a diversity of gender, age, and ethnic/racial identity is represented, as well as representation from various segments of the ministry of the congregation, such as Worship, Youth, WELCA, Men's groups, Education, Evangelism, etc. Due to potential conflicts of interest, the following persons should refrain from serving on the call committee: any paid church staff members, family members of current or former staff members, both partners of a married couple. Members of the Congregation Council may serve on the call committee (unless your constitution prohibits that), however we discourage a large number of Congregation Council members serve on the Call Committee as a general practice.

As soon as a Call Committee is formed, the Call Committee and Congregation Council should set up a date to meet with the person on the Bishop's staff who is responsible for the Call Process. That person will come give the Council and Call Committee an overview of the process, discuss the required paperwork (Ministry Site Profile) answer questions and concerns, and be available in the future should additional questions arise.

**Confidentiality cannot be overemphasized in the task of a calling a pastor/deacon.** Mention of specific candidates outside the Call Committee is inappropriate until the Committee is ready with its Primary Candidate recommendation to the Council. It is important to keep all names and both verbal and written information about prospective candidates within the confines of the Committee. This means Committee members will need to establish ground rules and boundaries, not only with the congregation at large, but also with those in their household or place of work. It should be noted, though, that the Call Committee should keep the congregation informed as to where in the process the Call Committee is. What is confidential is information about the candidate(s), not information about the process. Remember: you can talk to the congregation about the **PROCESS** but not the **PERSON** in the early stages of the call process.

**Prayer is an important activity for the Call Committee and the entire congregation throughout this process.** Call Committee members are encouraged to commit themselves to pray for one another and for the work of the Holy Spirit among them as they seek to discern God's will for their congregation. Special prayer at worship and during other meetings of the congregation is encouraged. When the Call Committee is appointed or elected, the names of the members are made public, with request that special prayers be made on their behalf. A link to a recommended Service of Installation for the Call Committee may be found on the synod's Call Process web page. <https://iksynod.org/call-process/>

The Council needs to give the Call Committee information concerning salary and benefit figures which the congregation can offer. While salary and benefit considerations are not matters to be negotiated between the candidate and Call Committee, the Call Committee may discuss compensation and benefit ranges with the candidate. The congregation or Council will also authorize funding expenses for the Call Committee's use in carrying out its responsibilities, such as cost of travel, meals and hotel expense for candidates invited to come to interview, or for travel by the Committee to hear a candidate preach at some other location. **Completion of the Ministry Site Profile is a collaborative effort between the Call Committee and Congregation Council – but how a congregation chooses to go about that will be determined by your own leaders and situation.**

If there are existing rostered ministers (pastor/deacon) who will remain on staff, it may be appropriate to involve them in the call process to ensure that the potential candidate will be a good fit within the staff and working relationship. The timing and level of involvement of the current rostered minister(s) will vary by situation – but would likely occur after the call committee has done initial interviews, but before a primary candidate is sent to the church council. The bishop or synod staff can advise on what is appropriate for particular situations.

## WHO WILL BE RECOMMENDED?

Names of *possible* candidates are secured from **a number of sources, including the congregation engaged in the call process. All initial contacts with possible candidates are to be made through the Bishop's office.** In order to recommend the best person possible for your congregation, the synod Bishop will:

- a. Review the congregation's ministry needs;
- b. Contact potential candidate(s) to see if he/she/they will permit his/her/their name to be submitted to the congregation; and
- c. Request a Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) of the person to be nominated.

Candidates' names will be selected on the following basis:

- a. Results of the congregational evaluation process;
- b. Nominations by the Council of the congregation in the call process;
- c. Consideration of pastors/deacons of this synod;
- d. Consideration of pastors/deacons from other synods (this requires consultation between synod Bishops); and
- e. Candidates eligible for call (seminary graduates).

Since it is the policy of the ELCA to ordain persons from all genders, the synod staff will consider all candidates who have the qualities needed to serve the congregation will be identified and presented. **It is expected that all candidates presented to the Call Committee will be interviewed.** In the consideration of persons for congregational staff ministry positions, it is essential that a job description be developed and shared with the Bishop's office, and that the senior/lead pastor participate in the call process. For additional information concerning Ministers of Word and Service (Deacon) candidates, please see the appropriate documents.

## INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

The Call Committee may request one, two or three candidates when they are ready to begin the interview process. If the Committee requests more than one name, **the Committee is expected to interview all candidates. The initial interview should occur within 30 days of receiving that candidate's paperwork.** Should the Committee not select any of the initial candidates received, normally only one candidate at a time will be sent from that time on. In the case of a First Call Candidate (a person not yet ordained as a pastor or deacon, who has been approved in the Candidacy process), they will be the only candidate available for consideration.

When the Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) of the candidate(s) is received, **the Chair of the Call Committee should contact the candidate within 1-3 days by phone or email to inform the candidate that the congregation has received their name and RMP.** The Chair may inquire of the candidate if they would like to receive bulletins, a newsletter, or other information about the congregation at that time (see below for other possible items of information). The candidate will have received already the congregation's Ministry Site Profile (MSP).

Before the interviewing begins, the Call Committee needs to meet to study carefully the Rostered Minister Profile and other information you may gather online about potential candidates given to it by the Bishop's office. The Call Committee is encouraged to reaffirm its commitment to trust and confidentiality at this time.

A telephone call is usually used to invite the candidate for an interview. The date, place, and anticipated length of the interview are discussed. Many initial interviews are held by remote means (phone or video conference) to allow the process to process in a timely manner. A follow up in-person interview can then be scheduled if there is interest in both the pastor/deacon and the call committee for further discernment. If there is a spouse, the Call Committee needs to clarify whether the spouse is invited to accompany the pastor/deacon to the in-person interview. Because the decision to accept a call impacts the entire family, it is important that the spouse be able to see the church, parsonage (if there is one) and community, and have a chance to ask questions he/she/they might have. In the initial interview, the spouse is sometimes invited to accompany the pastor/deacon, but not to participate in the interview itself.

The arrangements are confirmed by a letter or email to the candidate following the phone conversation. The letter may include a packet of information about the congregation, if that has not already been sent. Suggested items to be included are: a current annual report, worship folders, newsletters, a listing of staff, Council members, Call Committee members and the congregation's constitution and mission statement. If you have a Chamber of Commerce, you may ask it to provide an introductory packet of information about the community to include in this mailing. The letter also contains travel directions to reach the interview site, and congregational provisions for reimbursement of all expenses for the pastor/deacon and spouse, if attending. Prompt reimbursement of the candidate for expenses incurred should follow the interview.

When planning to interview more than one candidate, it is expected that all initial interviews will follow the same format and setting (ether in-person or phone/video conference). It is helpful to have the same person should facilitate each the interview and committee members should be prepared with an agreed upon set of basic questions for each candidate. This will assure that all the bases are covered in each instance once the interview process begins. However, it is appropriate to have one or two additional questions that may be specific to each candidate based

on what they have shared in their Rostered Minister Profile. (This will also show them that you took an interest in the information they provided.)

Interviews with a candidate should be friendly and personal, as well as professional and spiritual. Remember that you are interviewing a fellow sister or brother in Christ. This is not a job interview; this is a process of communal discernment about God's call. Begin the process assuming that this might be your pastor/deacon sitting in front of you and begin building a solid relationship rooted in your common baptism into Christ.

Begin the actual questions with more personal questions aimed at getting to know the candidate as a person. Then move toward the more professional, educational, spiritual questions. This list of possible questions is not comprehensive, but merely suggestive for the committee:

1. How do you care for yourself physically, emotionally, socially?
2. How do you nurture yourself spiritually?  
Tell us about your prayer life.
3. What events led you to prepare for the ministry?
4. What books have you read recently that have made an impression on you?
5. Briefly state your personal faith.
6. What does it mean to you to be a mission director?
7. How do you describe yourself theologically?
8. What personal traits and gifts do you have that make it possible for you to be effective as a pastor/deacon?
9. How do you prepare a sermon?
10. Describe the areas of ministry you enjoy the most.
11. Describe the areas of ministry you enjoy the least.
12. What role do you see yourself fulfilling in relating to committees?
13. Tell us about your philosophy and style of pastoral care and visitation.
14. Discuss your expectations concerning catechetical instruction.
15. Share your thoughts regarding the worship life of a congregation.
16. In what ways do you participate in the community? In the synod?
17. What areas of involvement in your last/current ministry gave you personal satisfaction?
18. What is it about our congregation that interests and challenges you?
19. What are the roles of lay people in the ministry of the congregation and in God's mission in the world?
20. Or frame questions with this starting phrase, "Tell us about a time when..." if you are looking for them to share examples of a particular area or ministry focus. Past behavior is the best predictor for future action and success.

An effective interview is a two-way conversation, with the candidate also bringing questions and concerns. Allow time and opportunity for the candidate to ask questions and be prepared to address them. Remember, the candidate is also interviewing you! This is communal discernment.

## CALL COMMITTEE FOLLOW-UP

The Call Committee sends a letter/email or phone call of appreciation to the candidate for his/her/their willingness to be interviewed. This communication may encourage the candidate to address any additional questions or concerns to the call committee. Again, a promise of keeping the candidate current regarding the call process is made. **It is crucial that the Call Committee immediately notify the candidate when he/she/they is no longer being considered. The decision not to consider a candidate further is also submitted immediately to the synod office. Please note: it is the Call Committee's responsibility to inform a candidate that they are no longer being considered.**

## SELECTING ONE CANDIDATE

Following the interview(s), the Call Committee will need to agree on one candidate to be recommended to the Council. Discussion should focus on the gifts and abilities of the candidate relative to the congregational ministry needs, rather than on a comparison of candidates. Normally, the recommendation should require a near unanimous vote of the Committee. [The final vote of the congregation will require a 2/3 majority. If only 2/3 of the Call Committee is supportive, it increases the likelihood that 2/3 of the congregation won't. Further, many pastors/deacons would not accept a call where 1/3 of the congregation has not voted for them. So, the stronger the Call Committee vote, the better.] The size of the Committee is a factor. A smaller Committee would have a greater need for a unanimous vote. When the Committee has agreed on a candidate, the name is referred to the Council. The Council then has the responsibility of interviewing the candidate to determine whether or not to forward the candidate's name to the congregation for consideration.

**Primary Candidate:** Once the call committee has selected one candidate, be in contact with that person to determine if their discernment agrees, and they desire to move forward in the process. If the candidate agrees to move on to meet with the council – they are now the primary candidate. The congregation cannot consider any additional candidates at this time, and if the individual was engaged in any other call processes elsewhere, they should withdraw themselves from those places. It is important to clarify this step of becoming the primary candidate with the individual.

### **Step 3: Election**

- \_\_\_\_\_ The Call Committee assembles a summary of their interaction with candidate for presentation to the Council to thoroughly acquaint the council with the candidate. The candidate's RMP may also be shared with the Council.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Council interviews the candidate recommended by the Call Committee and, if proceeding with the candidate, determines compensation, benefits, and related details to be recommended as part of the nomination of the candidate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A congregational meeting is called and announced in accord with constitutional requirements.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Bishop's office is notified of the Council's decision and the date of the meeting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The congregation is provided with descriptive information regarding the candidate, and an opportunity to meet the candidate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The nomination of the Congregation Council is presented at the congregational meeting conducted by an appointee of the Bishop. Election of a pastor requires a two-thirds majority vote by written ballot. (If the vote is to reject, then the Call Committee conducts more interviews to select another candidate.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Compensation and benefits are adopted by a majority vote.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Council officers (president and secretary) sign the Letter of Call and compensation documents as voted upon by the congregation and complete the official call to the pastor/deacon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The candidate is immediately contacted by the Council chair and informed of the call vote of the congregation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Letter of Call and compensation documents are forwarded to the Bishop by the person appointed by the Bishop to conduct the Call Meeting, so that the Bishop may review, sign and attest the Letter of Call, and then these documents are sent to the pastor/deacon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The pastor/deacon called responds in writing within 30 days after receiving the Letter of Call.

### Step 3: Election

#### THE CALL COMMITTEE HAS CHOSEN ONE CANDIDATE.

Once a candidate has been selected, the Call Committee will present this candidate's name and copies of the RMP to the Congregation Council. The Call Committee will also inform the Council as to the particular leadership skills and characteristics which has led them to recommend this particular candidate. The entire Council then will want to become thoroughly acquainted with the candidate. This is accomplished by an interview with the candidate and would include a visit with the spouse if that has not previously happened.

The Council must be careful to act in accordance with the constitution of the congregation. (See *Model Constitution for Congregations of the ELCA*, \*C9.01. - \*C9.04.) The specific responsibilities of the Congregation Council are to nominate the candidate, to recommend the agreed upon initial compensation and benefits, and to call for a special meeting of the congregation. In order to nominate, a two-thirds majority vote of the church council is needed.

When the Council has nominated a candidate, they will schedule a social event in which members of the congregation can greet and chat informally with the candidate and family and time for questions and answers should be offered. This event may be scheduled a few days before the announced congregational meeting for determining whether the call will or will not be extended to the candidate, or on the same day. If this does not happen on a Sunday morning, then the fellowship event should include a brief worship service in which the congregation has an opportunity to experience the pastor/deacon's worship and preaching style.

A special congregational meeting is called by the Congregation Council for the expressed purpose of electing the nominated candidate. Because it is to be conducted by the Bishop or his/her appointee, the meeting should be scheduled in consultation with the Bishop's office. Notice of the special meeting must be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays and by mail or electronic means, as permitted by state law, to all confirmed or voting members at least ten days prior to the meeting. [The Council should consult its constitution for proper notification requirements – see chapter 10 in the *ELCA Model Constitution*.]

At the congregational meeting, a sign-in sheet is completed by the members eligible to vote, and a quorum is determined. Two votes are taken. The election of the pastor/deacon shall be by written ballot. An affirmative vote of two-thirds of the ballots **cast by the voting members in attendance** is necessary for the election of a new pastor/deacon. The compensation and benefits provisions are adopted by a simple majority vote. No proxy or absentee ballots are permitted. A tally of the total ballots should be signed by the tellers and retained for the congregational records.

The Council officers (president and secretary) shall sign the Letter of Call and the person conducting the Call Meeting shall forward it to the synod office to be attested by the Bishop. The synod office will provide the Council with a copy of the official Letter of Call for the congregation meeting.



In summary, the terminology used in the calling process is as follows:

the Bishop recommends. . .

the Call Committee selects. . .

the Council nominates. . .

the Congregation elects. . .

the Council officers forward. . .

the Bishop attests. . .

. . .the Official Call to a Pastor/deacon

Now comes a time of anticipation and preparation. The candidate is to respond within 30 days after receiving the Official Call Document from the Bishop's office. If the called person accepts the call, it is a time of major transition for him/her as well. It may involve completing one's education and preparing for ordination. Or it may mean resigning from another ministry setting and moving. In any event, there will be a period of preparation for both the newly called pastor/deacon and your congregation.

**Step 4: Start-Up**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Notify the congregation that the pastor/deacon-elect has accepted the call.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare for the arrival of your new pastor/deacon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make plans with the bishop and synod office and with your new pastor/deacon for a service of installation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Acknowledge the end of service of the Pastor of Record or Interim Pastor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Welcome the new pastor/deacon (and every member in the pastor/deacon's family).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Introduce your new pastor/deacon to the Mutual Ministry Committee, the congregation and the community.

## **Step 4: Start-Up**

### THE CANDIDATE HAS ACCEPTED OUR CALL.

Consult with your pastor/deacon-elect to determine when the accepted call can be publicly announced. When appropriate, notify the congregation that the call has been accepted. Next, notify the synod office of the acceptance and make tentative plans for a service of installation.

In preparing for the arrival of your new pastor/deacon, be sure the following details are accomplished:

Determine when he/she/they will move to the community and when the work will officially begin.

Be sure the parsonage (if provided) is fully ready for occupancy with redecoration completed and utilities turned on.

If you provide a housing allowance, be ready to provide hospitality to the pastor/deacon and family when they are on house-hunting expeditions.

Be prepared to pay all moving expenses related to the call, such as the cost of a moving truck and crew to load/unload the belongings, packing supplies, etc. (It is not expected that the congregation would pay closing costs, cover the expense of buying out existing contracts, etc. – however, anything is negotiable in this process if the rostered minister and congregation agree.) Due to recent changes in IRS tax rulings, Beginning in 2018, under the previous year's tax reform legislation, employers must include all moving expenses in employees' wages, subject to income and employment taxes.<sup>1</sup>

Prepare a collection of local maps, information on town, list of shops and cultural sights, name of medical professionals, and other information which will help orient the pastor/deacon and family upon arrival.

Allow for a settling-in time for the pastor/deacon and family.

### SERVICE OF INSTALLATION

The bishop provides for the installation of the new pastor/deacon as the presider for the installation service. If the bishop is unable to be present at this service, they will appoint a designee to take their place such as another synod staff member or conference dean. The congregation and the new pastor/deacon arrange the service outline and select other participants. The service of installation should be held as soon as possible after the pastor/deacon's arrival. Conference congregations should be notified and invited to participate in the service, which is normally held at a time other than Sunday morning.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/tax-reform-brings-changes-to-qualified-moving-expenses>

## START-UP

Remember that all pastors/deacons do not place equal priority on the same activities. Activities that were habitual for your former pastor/deacon may be rare for the new pastor/deacon. During this transition, it is important for the congregation and the new pastor/deacon to share expectations openly and negotiate priorities.

If your new pastor/deacon has a family, be sure to welcome every member. Be sensitive to the special needs of each member and decide on appropriate ways to introduce them to the congregation and into the community.

Introduce your new pastor/deacon to the community. This is as important for your congregation as it is for your pastor/deacon. Consider all possible means of community introduction including newspaper, radio and television. Invite congregational members to introduce the new pastor/deacon to community groups, leaders and agencies.

## CONGREGATIONAL MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE

In the course of selecting your new pastor/deacon, your Call Committee has enjoyed a frank and open relationship. With the new candidate, they have already begun to develop a sense of mutual ministry. That sense of mutuality need not end. It can grow and develop even more richly over the years ahead.

If your congregation does not already have an active Mutual Ministry Committee, now is the ideal time to organize one. The Call Committee could be asked to serve in this capacity, at least for the first year, since they are often the ones who know the pastor/deacon best. A Mutual Ministry Committee can meet regularly with the pastor/deacon and other staff persons to discuss mutual concerns. Together they seek to develop and strengthen mutual ministries of the pastor/deacon and congregation.

A good resource for forming a Mutual Ministry Committee is the book *Pastor and People* (it can be purchased through Amazon or Augsburg Fortress, <https://www.augsburgfortress.org>).

Such a Committee also provides a way to review periodically how the ministry of the pastor/deacon and the people measures up to the expectations set forth in the process leading to the call. This review might take place each year on the anniversary of the call. A member of the synod staff may be invited to meet with the Council and pastor/deacon during the last half of the first year of a new call to assist in beginning the review process.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The process of calling a new pastor/deacon is now ended. Ahead lie years of opportunity for growth in Christ as you pursue God's mission through the ministry of your congregation. The work done by your Call Committee will bear fruit. May God's richest blessing be with you, your congregation and your new pastor/deacon.

Thank you, Lord, for leading us together to service to you in your church. May you be glorified by our ministry in your name.  
Amen.