



Southwestern Washington Synod  
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church  
in America

**2021 Call Manual**

For all Ministers of Word and Sacrament  
and  
Ministers of Word and Service



# Southwestern Washington Synod

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

The Rev. Richard E. Jaech, Bishop

God's Beloved People:

Those of you who find this call manual in your hands are, most likely, about to begin the frightening and exhilarating process of calling a new minister.

Many thoughts might occupy your minds:

- How, when the grieving is still so real, can we even think of calling a new Minister?
- How, given the variety of folk in our parish, can we ever find a leader for all of us?
- How will God's Holy Spirit work among us?
- How will we stay vital and mission-minded during the interim?

Those of us who will be working with you in your call process know your questions are many and your expectations high. We would have you think of this process as one in which your community draws together-- aided by the larger church--to fulfill one of its essential functions. The church has been doing this for centuries. The advisor and helper is God's Spirit, promised to the gathered church (Matthew 18:20) and now ready to empower you for your task.

Elsewhere in this manual you will find some resources available for your use. They are provided because your church thinks they are helpful. We hope you will take advantage of them.

Although we cannot tell you how long your process will take, (probably somewhere between 6 and 12 months), we can promise to aid you in the timeliest way possible. The process you are entering is broad and deep, something more than hiring staff. During the process you will have ministerial care and worship leadership. True ministry will be done among you during this process. We invite you to take advantage of this interim ministry and relax into the process of calling, letting your best thoughts and prayers of your common future dominate. "And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:7)

Sincerely in Christ,

Bishop Richard Jaech, SWWA Synod

420 121st St S Tacoma, WA 98444 • 253-535-8300 • [swwsynod@plu.edu](mailto:swwsynod@plu.edu) • [www.lutheranssw.org](http://www.lutheranssw.org)

*The mission of the Southwestern Washington Synod is to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ by empowering congregations and Church leaders to grow in worship, education, outreach, stewardship and other ministries.*

# Introduction

## What is “Call”?

While there are aspects of your task that look much like “hiring and employee”, rostered leaders in the Church are not “hired” but “called” after prayerful deliberation. The distinction is more than simple semantics. Those called to ministerial leadership positions in the Church are gifted with a relationship with the people of God that allows them to be a part of people’s lives at the most sacred moments.

Lutherans understand leadership to be a call to proclaim both Law and Gospel. Leaders are called to comfort and console, support and care for God’s people. They are also called to proclaim and live a corrective challenging Word from God that may at times cause discomfort. If the relationship between minister and congregation is seen simply as employer-employee arrangement, the latter responsibility would be difficult to carry out.

When this manual talks about the call process for a minister, it is referring to all Ministers of Word and Sacrament (Pastor) and Word and service (Deacon).

## What is “Discernment”?

*Excerpted from “Discerning God’s Will: The Basics of Discernment For Call Committees and Church Councils” by Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel*

When a congregation enters into the call process, they enter into a process of discernment that has its roots in the New Testament community described in the book of Acts. Throughout Acts, at every point of development of the new Christian Church, the Spirit was there doing the leading with the church members seeking the leading and following the Spirit’s bidding. The Spirit led Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch to interpret God’s word and baptize him (Acts 8.29). The Spirit led Paul and his companions to each and every city of his missionary journeys, even forbidding entry to some (Acts 19.21; 16.6-7).

The Church lived its life as a life of discernment. And as a result, "Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, the church increased in numbers" (Acts 9.31). How did the Spirit lead? How was God’s will known? From Acts we see the Spirit coming to both individuals (11.12) and groups (2.1-4; 21.4). In Acts, the Spirit comes during worship and fasting (13.2), during prayer (10.9-16), in answered prayer (10.31), during the preaching of God’s word (10.44), at baptism (19.1-6), in the laying on of hands (8.14-17), in visions (9.10-12; 10.3-6), as a voice heard (8.29; 10.19), as an insight (11.28), as a matter of reading the signs and interpreting events (11.1-18; 16.6-7; 20.22-23), and as reported above, within group processes of deliberation and conversation (Acts 11 and 15).

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

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

## Brief Overview of the Four Phases of Rostered Minister Transition

### **Phase One:**

#### **When a Minister Resigns or Retires**

The first phase of the interim process begins when a minister announces an upcoming departure. As a rostered minister leaves, it is important to find a way to say good-bye and to begin to define appropriate boundaries so that the congregation is able to receive another individual as their minister.

If you are a congregation president, this process should be started in consultation with the Synod Bishop's Associate who will support and guide you through the transition and call processes. Phase One is typically completed when an Interim Pastor is appointed by the Bishop in consultation with the congregation council.

#### **Phase Two: Self-Study and Visioning Process, Congregational Profile**

Phase Two of the interim/transition process begins with the welcoming of the Interim Minister. The minister will carry out the work of interim/transition ministry by following a widely accepted process for congregational transition.

Phase Two is also the time for appointing a Transition Team. The purpose of this team is to help the congregation conduct a study of itself and its situation (see "Work of the Transition Team" section of manual). Phase Two concludes with the preparation of a package of material called the Ministry Site Profile, and its online submission to the ELCA portal and approval by the Synod Office.

#### **Phase Three: The Call Process**

Phase Three of the transition process is the Call Process. The Call Process begins when the Ministry Site Profile has been completed and a Call Committee has been selected. The Call Committee receives the names of possible ministerial candidates from the Synod Office and carries out its work in confidentiality (see "Work of the Call Committee" section of manual). If the congregation decides to issue a call to the ministerial candidate, and the ministerial candidate accepts, then he or she becomes the next regularly-called minister of the congregation.

#### **Phase Four: Welcoming the New Minister**

The congregation welcomes their new Minister of Word and Sacrament or Word and Service and celebrates a new partnership with a formal installation services, arranged in tandem with the Synod Office. Congregational leaders may arrange opportunities for members to meet and become acquainted with the new minister. Resources that help to orient the new minister to the community are much appreciated. The arrival of the new minister, associate minister or deacon is not a time when "things return to normal," but is a continuing part of transition as the minister and congregation continue to live into the future to which God is calling them together.

## **Glossary of Terms**

### **Minister**

Although the majority of Call Committees are formed to call a minister to their church, this manual uses the term "Minister of Word and Sacrament" for Pastor and "Minister of Word and Service" for Deacon. In the ELCA both pastors and deacons are ordained and both are considered rostered leaders of the Church. The Call process for each of these rosters is the same.

### **Ministry Site Profile**

In short, this is the profile of the Congregation that shares congregational history, current structures and staffing patterns, hopes for future mission directions, demographic data about the community, as well as the gifts for leadership being sought by the congregation. The Ministry Site Profile is written by the Transition Team with input from the congregational members. In most cases, the MSP will serve as the ministry candidates first introduction to the congregation.

### **Rostered Minister Profile (RMP)**

This form, completed by the rostered minister candidates, includes responses to a number of questions about their theology, their understandings of their gifts for ministry, personal information, employment and educational history. It also includes references that the Synod Office and the Call Committee use in the call process to select a rostered leader that is a good match for the congregation.

### **Compensation**

This is the financial package that impacts the congregation's budget and supports the rostered leader called to your congregation. It includes salary and housing allowance (the council will officially vote to affirm the clergy persons' housing allowance to satisfy IRS guide-lines), Social Security offset, pension, health benefits, car allowance, vacation, continuing education and professional expenses, etc. It is helpful to candidates when there is clarity as to what is available to them to cover their day-to-day living expenses, and what their other benefits are.

### **Letter of Call**

The official letter (certificate) and supporting documents extending the congregation's call to the rostered leader. This form will be provided to the congregation's Council President for signatures by the Synod Office once a call vote is scheduled by the congregation. The forms require the signatures of the Council President, Council Secretary and Synod Bishop.

## The Work of the Transition Team

The work of the Transition Team depends upon congregational input. This team works with the congregation members to assess and articulate the needs and interests for the future of the congregation. The team also writes the final version of the Ministry Site Profile, based on congregational input.

The Synod recommends that the Transition Team includes a maximum of one member from the Council and this Council member does not chair the team. This allows for more people from the congregation to be involved with lay leadership and the transition/call process, and also helps congregational members to view this as a congregational document, not just one that elected leadership is pushing through.

To access resources for the Ministry Site Profile, you will need to open a Community Account with the ELCA ([www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)) Be sure that several people in leadership and your church office have the user ID and password for this congregational account. This way you can also access past Ministry Site Profiles, as well.

### **Ministry Site Profile Process**

A Ministry Site Profile (MSP) is the instrument which summarizes the identity and direction of the congregation. It is especially useful to the Call Committee when interviewing candidates. The Synod staff will send the Ministry Site Profile to prospective candidates for discernment. While not everything on the Ministry Site Profile is essential, care should be taken to provide the basic information. Some congregations have added even more information as longer explanations on the form, or as additional attachments.

**To find essential resources related to the MSP, go to [elca.org](http://elca.org), click on “Call Process” (upper right), click on “Ministry Site” button (middle of page). You will find a sample MSP as well as a tutorial video.**

Much of the information needed for the MSP is available from current church records. Information regarding the community can be drawn from several sources, including the school district(s), the chamber of commerce, census reports and past congregational parochial reports. The rest of the information comes from interviewing congregation members, member surveys, and maybe even work with an outside consultant to assist the congregation in looking toward a new future.

The Ministry Site Profile will need the review of the church council when it is completed. Of special concern is the information regarding compensation. The Call Committee and the Bishop’s Office need that information before candidates are nominated and interviewed. The actual compensation package is completed by the Council, or Executive Committee, prior to the congregation’s call vote meeting.

**Please note that there is only one copy of the Ministry Site Profile online. Every time you take it down to update some information, or maybe to fix a typo, it is no longer visible to anyone. You MUST resubmit it every time you make a change to the document!**

# The Work of the Call Committee

The central work of the Call Committee is holy discernment.

*The following list comes from “Discerning God’s Will: The Basics of Discernment for Call Committees and Church Councils, by Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel.*

## Some Basics about Discernment

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

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

Therefore, a whole posture of listening becomes important during the discernment and call process – in worship, in prayer, in conversation, in deliberation, in private devotions, in group Bible study, in preaching and teaching. Listening is a premium in discerning the leading of the Spirit.

6. **Exploring** is what will occur within the call process itself, especially at the time of the interviews by the Call Committee, the council and eventually the congregation. Exploring is how Christians come to know God's leading and includes sorting through options. As exemplified in Acts 6, exploring goes beyond skills and gifts to seek the spiritual. During an interview, exploring will ask, "Is the Spirit clearly evident in this candidate? Is this minister's inner call and personal faith evident as well? Is the hand of God evident in the life and past ministry of this candidate? Is the Spirit leading this candidate to minister in this congregation and setting?"

7. **Weighing** is what comes after the interviews. In addition to the normal positives and negatives, pros and cons, that are identified, the Call Committee, the council and congregation seeks foremost to know what comes from God. What here leads toward God and not away from God? What is filled with human novelty or invention? Does the Spirit seem to rest on a particular individual or path? Weighing is the spiritual process of identifying the Spirit's leading.

8. **Deciding** moves the process to the final test: is this choice the choice of God? Ignatius of Loyola, who founded the monastic order of the Society of Jesus in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and wrote a great deal about discernment, suggested that a decision based upon discernment will be filled with one of two things. Either it will be filled with **consolation** and movement toward God, assisting in loving God more. Or it will be filled with **desolation** and movement away from God, pulling people toward things that are other than godly.

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## **Appointing or Electing a Call Committee**

The first step is to refer to your congregation's constitution C.13.05 for a description of the process your congregation uses for assembling your Call Committee.

Whether voted on by the Council or by the congregation, it is important to resist "stacking the deck" in favor of one interest group or age group in the congregation.

## **Establish Working Rules at the Beginning**

No matter how solid your congregation, a call process is likely to provoke big questions and some fear. Setting working rules in place before beginning your tasks can be extremely beneficial.

Some issues to consider:

- How will you choose your leaders?
  - How many will be alternate members? Will they have voice and vote? When?
  - Are you going to operate by Robert's rules of order, or by a form of consensus decision-making?
  - What vote percentage in committee will be necessary to nominate a candidate to the congregation?
  - How will you keep the congregation informed?
  - Do you have the authority to take a nomination to the congregation, or do you take it to the council?
  - Do you have a solid sense from the council as to the salary and benefit range that can be offered by the congregation? Do you have this in writing before interviewing?
  - Do you have your own budget? What money is available to bring candidates in for interviewing or the Meet and Greet?
  - How do we know which members are legal Voting Members and get to vote?
-

## Process Details

**Prayer**--It is helpful to have a group of members “on call” to pray for the committee whenever it is in sessions. The Call Committee will want to pray as it begins and ends each session, including meetings and interviews. At the time of making decisions, allow plenty of time for individual and group prayer. Never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Meeting times** can fluctuate, but it is best to set a pattern of specific days or evenings. Once a chair has been selected, an agenda can be set up. Each member of the Call Committee will recognize the importance of candor, openness, and a willingness to examine and discuss all the issues and candidates.

**Interim Ministers** are normally not involved in the Call Process, except on those rare occasions when requested by the Bishop. It is not usually recommended for an Interim/Transition Minister to be considered as a possible ministerial candidate for your congregation.

**Continuing staff** (paid) are normally not involved in interviews. However, most candidates will want to meet them, and staff will want to know at least the finalist. Arrangements can be made for candidates to meet with staff as appropriate in each situation. It is helpful to be clear what the role of staff is in providing feedback on the candidates. If feedback is desired, to whom shall it be offered?

**Bishop’s office** maintains a list of ELCA ministers who are actively seeking call. The Bishop’s Associate contacts those candidates, with permission from their bishops, who appear to be a good match for the congregation, as described in the Ministry Site Profile. Rostered Minister Profiles for these candidates are submitted to the Call Committee.

### **Ready—Set—Interview!**

The Congregational Call Committee:

- Reviews names submitted by the Synod Office.
- Sends names of people nominated by congregational members to the Synod Office for review.
- Releases names of candidates they decide not to interview, shares names with Synod Office & informs each candidate of their decision.
- Arranges dates, times, and other details of interviews, including a preparation session for the interviewers.
- Interviews candidates. A free Zoom tele-conference can be set up with the Synod Office for the initial interview with your candidates, if desired. Call Allison at 253-535-8300 or email [swwsynod@plu.edu](mailto:swwsynod@plu.edu) to request this.

## Issuing the call

The Congregational Call Committee, after deliberation, presents for congregational vote a recommendation for call. Ideally the candidate will have been presented to the congregation in a social setting prior to the vote.

The names of interviewed candidates not recommended for call are released. The Congregational Call Committee informs these candidates and the Synod Office of their being released.

At an officially called special congregational meeting attended by a representative of the Synod Office, a call vote is taken.

**Since a Synod Representative must be present to attest a Call/Compensation vote, please remember to consult with the Synod Office when selecting a date for your congregational meeting.**

If the vote to call is successful (2/3), the congregation notifies the Bishop, who attests the call. The Letter of Call is created by the Synod Office and signed by the Council President and Secretary. It is forwarded to the Synod Office for the Bishop's signature and seal, and they send to the candidate for call.

If the vote to call is not successful, the process is repeated beginning with a review of the Ministry Site Profile.

## Last Things

- The candidate receiving a letter of call/appointment has 30 days to accept or decline. If the call is accepted, the process continues.
- If the call is declined, the process begins again with a review of the Ministry Site Profile.
- Once the call/appointment is accepted and filled, the interim ministry is concluded with thanksgiving & the action is noted by the Bishop's Office.
- Time for Celebration! Ordination (if applicable) and installation services are planned and carried out with the assistance of the Synod Office.

**The synod bishop or his designee needs to conduct the ordination and installation of all rostered persons in this synod.**

## Common Timeline

While it is impossible to predict the amount of time that the Call Process will take, a typical flow of events may be:

- 1 – 4 months** Ministry Site Profile prepared by Transition Team for submission online to the ELCA. This phase lays the foundation for the entire process and should not be hurried. Adequate time must be allowed to hear from the entire membership of the congregation.
  
- 4 - 6 weeks** The bishop's office reviews possible candidates (those forwarded by the congregation as well as ministers asked by the bishop to consider interviewing with your congregation), decides which candidates will be recommended to the Call Committee, and processes each candidate's Rostered Minister Profile for submission to the Call Committee.
  
- 2—3 months interviews.** The Call Committee contacts candidate and arranges and conducts interviews.  
  
The logistics of inviting a candidate for a visit may take time since several calendars are involved.
  
- 1 - 2 months** The congregation Council receives the Call Committee's recommendation and schedules a special congregation meeting to vote on issuing a call according to their constitution. Most congregation constitutions require a two-week notice to its members before such a meeting to call can take place.
  
- 30 days** Constitutionally, ministers are usually allowed 30 days to respond to a call.
  
- 30 - 60 days** Most congregation constitutions provide for a minimum 30 days period between the time a minister resigns and concludes his or her present ministry. This time allows for a proper and orderly transition.

## **Candidate Nominations from Congregation**

In some instances, names of possible ministerial candidates surface in the congregations. These names should be directed to the Call Committee Chair using the official CONGREGATIONAL NOMINATION FOR CALL form (see appendix). The nominee must be a person on the ELCA clergy roster or an approved and available seminary graduate assigned to this Synod. The names will then be submitted to the Synod Office for consideration along with other potential candidates. If the candidate is on the clergy roster of another synod, our Bishop's Associate will need to obtain clearance from the Bishop of that Synod.

**Under NO circumstances is it appropriate for a member of the Call Committee to make direct contact with a prospective candidate except to schedule the official interview once the Call Committee selects that candidate for further inquiry.** If a possible candidate contacts the congregation directly, please refer them to the Call Committee Chair and the Synod Bishop's Associate.

## **MATERIALS TO SEND CANDIDATE PRIOR TO INTERVIEW**

This list is intended to help you put together an excellent packet of materials for the candidates so that they arrive with solid background on the call. Please add items that you think may assist the candidate in getting "The Big Picture" of your congregation, such as:

### **Congregational Records:**

- Annual Reports for at least the past five years.
- Copies of the yearly Parochial Report (Churchwide Form A and C) for the past five years.
- Any congregational history that may have been written.
- Copies of newspaper articles or other publicity that focus on the congregation.

### **Community Records:**

- Chamber of Commerce brochures on your community.
- A map of your community.
- A sample of the local newspaper.
- Other promotional materials the community produces.
- Information on schools and districts in area.
- Information on vocational possibilities for spouse, if relevant.

### **The Interview Visit Agenda:**

- Social opportunities.
- Where will the candidate be housed?
- If the candidate's family is coming, what will they do during the interview, etc?  
Hospitality for the spouse, child care, etc?
- Any questions you would like the candidate to consider before arriving.

## INTERVIEW HELP

A common agenda or some basic guidelines for your discussion are very important to both parties in a helpful, candid manner. Here are two ways to develop the agenda:

- Build an interview agenda based upon important information about your as a congregation and about the visiting candidate. (The Ministry Site Profile should provide a careful, updated view of your membership and ministries. The candidate's Rostered Leader Profile should assist you in pursuing any particulars during the interview.)
- Build an interview agenda with the Ministry Site Profile and candidate's Rostered Minister Profile information, as noted above, but supplement this information with existing interview guidelines.

It is important to consciously build the interview agenda on substantiated information. Failure to do this may project a "good old days" description of the congregation. The prospective candidate may then base his/her response to your call on stereotyped impressions that bear little relation to the present or future of your parish.

## SOME SUGGESTED "DO'S AND DON'TS" for the Interview

You may use the Synod's Zoom account for a first interview meeting. Contact the Synod Office to set this up 253-535-8300 at least 1 week prior to the meeting.

1. **Do** plan time for the guest candidate to present his/her agenda items. **Don't** bypass or soft-pedal his/her concerns. Such questions will tell much about the person being interviewed. Your responses will tell you much about yourselves.
2. **Do** allow the candidate to express any particular personal or family needs
3. **Do** expect that the interview will give you a good idea of the candidate's interest and availability. **Don't** press the candidate to answer the question as to what he/she would do with the call if you extended it. Don't even ask the question!!
4. **Do** expect God to do great things in these interviews! **Don't** become impatient in the process. Take the time you need. You'll need the time you take.
5. **Do** follow up each interview with a note to the candidate, expressing gratitude and updating him/her on the status of the call process.
6. **Do** keep the congregation informed during the interview process (newsletter, bulletin board, Sunday bulletins, verbal announcements, etc.). **Don't** assume they know what you (church council/call committee) are doing, why, or when. Chances are good they need regular reminders.

7. **REGARDING THE CALL ITSELF: Do** make contact immediately with the Synod Office, if the Church Council, Call Committee or congregation has serious questions or misgivings about the compensation package, or about any candidate to whom the call may be extended, or, as in some instances, has already been extended. **Don't** enter into private counsel or individual negotiations with the called person. The synod staff can best assist you in these circumstances.

## Appendix (samples and forms)

### CALL PROCESS CHECKLIST

- ✓ Council notifies Synod Office of the vacancy or new position.
- ✓ Communication Plan in place for Transition and Call Process (bulletin, social media, etc.)
- ✓ Transition Team selected
- ✓ Ministry Site Profile submitted on ELCA portal.
- ✓ Rostered Minister Profiles of potential candidates received from Bishop's Associate
- ✓ Candidates selected for interview; inform Synod Office of scheduled interviews
- ✓ Conduct candidate Interviews. If you'd like to use the Synod Zoom account, please contact the Synod Office (253-535-8300)
- ✓ Follow up interviews with "thank you" note; communicate about timeline for process
- ✓ Promptly notify candidates not selected.
- ✓ Notify synod staff of Candidates selected or not selected for further consideration
- ✓ Consult with synod staff before scheduling Special Congregational meeting for Call and Compensation vote. A representative of the Synod must be present to attest the vote.
- ✓ Consult Synod staff regarding completion of the Letter of Call and the Definition of Compensation. These formal documents are provided by Synod Office to Council President before call vote meeting.
- ✓ Prepare materials regarding recommended candidate for Council and Congregation
- ✓ Notify congregation of candidate, including opportunities to get acquainted.
- ✓ Prepare to speak in support of the recommended candidate at the congregational meeting.
- ✓ Telephone the ministerial candidate after the meeting regarding the results.

## ORDER FOR INSTALLATION AND AFFIRMATION OF A CALL COMMITTEE (Worship Service)

Sit

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

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

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

P. Dear friends, you have been duly *appointed/elected* to serve as the Call Committee for this congregation in order to seek a minister to shepherd and lead us.

Sacred scripture guides us in our task, to seek a minister who strives for righteousness and godliness, faith and love, endurance and gentleness -- a minister who is a servant as Christ himself was a servant -- a minister who is not domineering or quarrelsome, but who leads with care and concern for God's flock -- a minister who is filled with the Holy Spirit and a trustworthy steward of the mysteries of God.

Yours is a spiritual endeavor on behalf of this congregation. Are you willing therefore to be open to the Spirit's leading, and, by prayer and holy conversation, to undertake this calling to seek a shepherd for us?

**R. Yes, and I ask God to help and guide me.**

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

**R. Yes, and I ask God to help and guide me.**

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

**R. Yes, and I ask God to help and guide me.**

*All stand.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

**C. Send us a shepherd, O Lord. (continued next page)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**C. Amen**

*The minister addresses the Call Committee.*

P. I now declare that you have been installed as the Call Committee of \_\_\_\_\_ Church

. May God bring your good work to fulfillment and grace in Christ's name.

**C. Amen**

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

**C. And also with you.**

*All share the peace of the Lord.*

The liturgy continues as is customary after the peace.

**CONGREGATIONAL NOMINATION FOR CALL Form**

I nominate: (name) \_\_\_\_\_

who is currently serving as (position, congregation, city) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please keep the following facts in mind when considering a nomination:**

All Congregational nominations must be submitted in writing, using this nomination form. NO nomination may be made from the floor at the call vote meeting.

After a rostered leader has served three years in his/her present call, he/she is eligible for nomination for other positions/congregations.

Interim ministers serving our congregation during the next months are not eligible to be considered for our call, unless stated in their Letter of Call or ministry contract.

Nominations must be received by the church office no later than \_\_\_\_\_.

The Synod staff will be able to better evaluate the nominee's qualifications with the information requested below. (Use other side of sheet, if necessary)

**NOMINEE**

**Known strengths of this nominee:**

1.

2.

3.

**Reasons why I feel he/she should be nominated for Call to our congregation:**

1.

2.

3.

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

*The following questions are merely suggestive; however, in forming any particular question the key issue is, "What answer are you looking for? How will you know when it's answered well?" Each question may be evaluated in three ways: (a) What does it have to do with the position? (b) What do we need to know? (c) Would we be willing to answer the same questions about ourselves?*

1. Tell us about your faith journey.
2. Share with us your calling that led you to become a pastor.
3. Describe the areas of ministry which you value as high priorities.
4. Talk about the ministry areas you like to do. Why?
5. What pastoral roles give you the most trouble? Why?
6. Discuss your strengths as well as those area on which you need work.
7. Share your thoughts regarding the worship life of the congregation.
8. What are your expectations for yourself and lay persons in liturgical practices?
9. Describe your preaching philosophy and style. What things do you emphasize in your preaching. What are your ideas regarding children's sermons?
10. Discuss your thoughts, expectations and requirements concerning catechetical instruction.
11. Discuss in detail your expectations/philosophy of, and pastoral involvement in: Educational Ministry, Evangelism, Stewardship, Benevolence, Youth Ministry and Social Ministry.
12. From your perspective, what were the areas in the last parish which gave you personal satisfaction?
13. What role do you see the pastor fulfilling in relating to committees?
14. How do you see your role in relation to congregation council?
15. Describe your philosophy of visitation and pastoral calling.
17. Why are you considering accepting this call?
18. How do you see yourself involved in our community and the synod?
19. Tell us about your hobbies.

**The Committee may want to ask specific questions based on the areas that they have identified as high priority on their Ministry Site Profile. Following are some sample questions in each of the areas:**

### **Worship / Preaching**

- Describe how you go about preparing for the worship service on Sunday morning.
- Think back in your ministry and tell me about the most difficult sermon you ever preached.
- Share some of your thoughts about the worship life of a congregation.

### **Social Ministry**

- Tell us how you evaluate community needs and community strengths.
- Describe how you have contributed to the quality of life in your community. 95
- Describe how you go about motivating members of your congregation to respond to community needs.

### **Administrator / Leader**

- Describe the steps you take normally when working with groups to achieve consensus of cohesiveness.
- How would you describe your style of leadership in overseeing the work of the congregation.
- Tell us about a period in your life when you had to manage multiple demands in your work and how you determined priorities.

### **Teaching the Faith**

- How do you evaluate the faith development of others?
- Describe your approach to helping adults to grow in their faith.
- Describe your approach to teaching children and young people about the Christian faith.

### **Evangelism**

- Describe ways in which you typically become acquainted and associate with unchurched people in your community.
- What kind of guidance and training do you provide members of your congregation for reaching unchurched persons in the community?
- Describe how you have achieved a multicultural approach to your ministry.

### **Interpersonal Climate**

- What steps do you take in helping others feel secure, trusted, and open with you?
- When pressure mounts how do you maintain your cool in ministry?
- Describe an experience where conflict arose between yourself and another person and how resolution was finally achieved.

### **Ministry in Crisis / Counseling**

- Describe your style of ministry to persons in crisis.
- Describe how you have used the establishment of boundaries to strengthen your ministry.
- How do you assess your own professional limitations when ministering to persons in crisis?

### **Interpreter of Theology**

- Describe ways in which you communicate the faith.
- Describe your skills as teacher and preacher.
- What resources keep you theologically and Biblically fresh and current?

### **Innovator**

- Describe your approach to introducing new ideas in the congregation.
- Describe your current vision for ministry and how you would help others in the congregation to capture that vision.
- Think back in your ministry and describe a situation that was stagnate or failing and describe how you stepped in to revitalize it.

### **Denominational Leadership**

- Describe how you have guided your congregation into understanding their relationship to the greater church
- Describe your participation in the work of the church beyond the congregation, including ecumenical relationships, church agencies and institutions.
- Describe what your congregation believes to be their role as a congregation of the ELCA.

### **Stewardship**

- Describe how you have helped others grow in their personal stewardship.
- In what ways have you helped members understand the management of their money and their responsibilities as Christian stewards?
- Describe the development of your personal sense of Christian stewardship.

### **Personal Growth**

- Describe some of your most important accomplishments and how you went about reaching those goals.
- How do you work at making yourself more effective in your work?
- Briefly describe ways in which you care for yourself physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

### **Your Call To Ministry**

- Briefly describe the events which led you to prepare for the ministry.
- Describe the process of deliberation which helps you determine God's call.
- In what ways has your call to ministry changed over the years?

### **Possible Interview Questions for Associate Pastor Candidates**

- What are the essential things for maintaining a good and effective relationship with the senior pastor and other staff?
- Tell about a time when you had a disagreement with a co-worker or supervisor. How did you react? What was the conclusion of the disagreement? What did you learn? What would you do differently?
- Tell about a time when you were unclear about direction from your supervisor or colleagues. How did you handle it? What did you like about your reaction and what would you change?
- [Assuming that the candidate has met with the senior pastor, and that the sr. pastor is not in the room] After your meeting with the senior pastor how do you see your styles complementing each other? What do you see as the potential difficulties in your working relationship?
- [Who does the Associate Pastor report to? Who does their evaluations?] How does the candidate react to that structure?

## QUESTIONS THE CANDIDATE MAY WISH TO ASK YOU

**The Call Committee may want to be prepared to answer any of the following**

1. What is the focus of the congregation's ministry?
2. What is the rostered staff person's role, the lay staff person's role and what is the laity's role?
3. What is the congregation's history: stewardship, age levels, leadership?
4. How many interest groups and organizations are there?
5. How many innovative worship services have you had during the year, and what was the response?
6. How many people are involved in leadership roles? How are lay people involved in worship?
7. How involved do you like your staff person to be in the community?
8. Describe your administrative structure.
9. What has been done in:
  - a. Evangelism?
  - b. Finance?
  - c. Social Ministry?
  - d. Christian Education?
  - e. Stewardship?
  - f. Outreach?
10. Is there a need for a building program? How do you rate your facilities?
11. Details of Call: salary, housing, benefits, and what will be done in the future?
12. What long- and short-term goals has the congregation adopted? When was the last in-depth self-analysis of the congregation's program/function done?
13. What are the links between this congregation and the community; other churches?
14. Describe the "personality" of your congregation.
15. What does the congregation provide for my continuing education?
16. What other staff is employed? Are changes in these positions expected?
17. How does the congregation respond to change?
18. What is the congregation's benevolence record for the last three years?
19. What part should my spouse and family take in the parish? What are your expectations for my family's involvement in the parish?

**INTERVIEW EXPENSE VOUCHER**

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

Call Committee Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Travel by air from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Travel by car from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ miles at \_\_\_\_\_ cents/mile

Meals: \_\_\_\_\_

Taxi/limousine/bus/parking: \_\_\_\_\_

Miscellaneous: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

Please attach all receipts.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Address

\_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Call Committee Chair

Date

Check sent to candidate on \_\_\_\_\_

**SAMPLE LETTER OF THANKS TO THOSE CANDIDATES INTERVIEWED BUT NOT RECOMMENDED TO THE CONGREGATION.**

**(This may be sent via email, or used as a guide for a phone conversation.)**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

By action of the Call Committee at \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church, we are recommending another candidate for the call to ministry with us. In doing so, we have released your name to the Southwestern Washington Synod for consideration by other congregations.

We thank you for the opportunity to interview you and get to know you. We wish you God's peace and ask that you keep our congregation in your prayers during this call period.

Thank you again for being with us. If you have not yet received reimbursement for expenses related to the interview, please let us know by calling our Call Committee Chair \_\_\_\_\_ at phone) \_\_\_\_\_ or (email) \_\_\_\_\_.

In Mission with You,

\_\_\_\_\_

# MATERIALS FOR CHURCH COUNCIL

## HOW TO CONDUCT A CALL MEETING

1. It is the responsibility of the Church Council to conduct the call meeting. The president of the congregation or an appointee of the council should conduct the meeting.
2. **NOTICES:**
  - ✓ Verify that the congregation has been properly notified of the meeting according to the constitution.
  - ✓ Verify that the Synod Office has been properly notified of the meeting time and place and that a representative of the Bishop's Office will be present.
  - ✓ Verify that a quorum exists according to the requirements of your church constitution.
3. Tellers should be appointed for counting the vote. You may choose to do written ballots, or have some of your people call in on a teleconference, including Zoom. No one can vote who has not attended the meeting (absentee). No one can vote for someone else (proxy).

**If your congregational meeting is taking place remotely, please see following section “Guidelines for Conducting Remote Congregational Meetings”. There are Washington State laws and ELCA constitutional requirements about how remote meetings are conducted.**

4. Open the meeting with prayer followed by introductions of any visitors attending the meeting. Explain that this is a special meeting of the congregation and that the only business before the congregation is the call. No other business may be transacted at this meeting. Ensure a quorum is met. (In your constitution C10.04)
5. Explain what will happen at the meeting:
  - ✓ a nomination will be brought by the Call Committee;
  - ✓ discussion of the merits of the candidate;  
Two votes will be taken: one to call the minister (*requires at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose -Model Constitution for Congregations \*C9.0*) and one to approve the salary and benefits package (*vote may be written, by show of hands, or voice. It requires a simple majority vote.*)
6. A vote to call is taken. If successful, the meeting proceeds with presentation, discussion, and vote on the salary package. If the vote to call is not successful, the meeting is adjourned with an explanation of the process to follow.

## Guidelines for Conducting Remote Congregational Meetings in the Southwestern Washington Synod

During the next few months as we practice safe social distancing, congregations may find it necessary to conduct congregational meetings. If it is possible to postpone meetings this may be a wise choice. But in the event that a meeting is necessary (i.e. constitutionally mandated, elections need to take place, the call of a pastor or deacon), it is important that Washington State Law as well as the congregation's constitution, bylaws and continuing resolutions are respected.

### Washington State Law

Laws pertaining to the meeting of non-profit boards and members may be found at :

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=24.03&full=true>

The paragraphs most helpful for congregational meetings are found under RCW 24.03.075 and RCW 24.03.085.

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### Q: May our congregation host remote meetings? (xref: RCW.03.075)

For our purposes, a remote meeting is a meeting in which members are not physically present in the same space.

Under Washington State Law, unless your constitution or bylaws specifically prohibit remote meetings, they may be legally conducted, **as long as everyone in attendance can simultaneously hear each other and have the ability to speak to each other.** The ability to hear only the chairperson or designated speakers does not meet this standard. All attendees must be able to both speak and hear.

A person attending a meeting within these parameters is considered **Present** at the meeting.

### Q: How can we vote when meeting remotely? (xref RCW 24:03:085)

It is important to check your congregation's constitution and bylaws. Most specifically prohibit **proxy** and **absentee** voting. This means that you are not allowed to vote on behalf of another person (proxy) and are not allowed to vote if you were not present at the meeting (absentee).

If the remote meeting has met the aforementioned criteria, voting may be conducted electronically via Zoom, Skype, conference call or like-technologies that allow speaking and hearing by all members. Voting may also take place via written ballot dropped-off at a designated location (i.e. church building) during publicized hours. Ballots should include the written text of any motions as well as names for those nominated for elected positions. All who vote by drop-off ballot must have attended the remote meeting. If your constitution and bylaws **specifically allow voting by mail or electronic transmission**, members may mail or email a ballot to a designated, publicized address. As with drop-off or mail-in ballots, email ballots are to contain the text of motions or proposals, along with the names of people nominated for elected positions.

**Reminder:** If your constitution and bylaws prohibit absentee voting, only members who were present at the remote meeting may vote. Written ballots must be checked against an accurate meeting attendance list to be considered valid.

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### From SWWA Synod Attorney, James Hushagen

*I think the best way. . . to meet is by teleconference, which the applicable Washington nonprofit statute permits even if the congregation's constitution does not mention it. The good news these days is that a Zoom meeting qualifies as a teleconference for purposes of the statute. (Continued next page)*

Washington law does not allow pure voting by mail without an in-person meeting in most circumstances. My suggested "work-around" process would go something like this:

1. Send out hard-copy paper ballots with the notice of the meeting so that all congregation members have ballots at the time of the meeting.
2. Hold the meeting on Zoom, with the option for people without computers to call in to the meeting.
3. Take roll before the meeting starts so you know you have a quorum and who is attending the meeting.
4. For matters that don't require a ballot, vote by a "show of hands" on Zoom and a polling of people in the meeting by phone.
5. For matters that require a ballot, ask each member at the meeting to complete his or her ballot during the meeting.
6. When they have marked their ballots, advise the members to put their names on the completed ballots and return them to the church office, either by mail or by personal delivery, within a certain time period. The names are necessary so you know that only persons who attended the meeting voted; ballots without names or with names of persons not at the meeting will not count. You should promise the members that nobody will know how they voted, but only that they voted.
7. When the votes have been counted, you can announce the results.

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#### **Suggested Checklist for Remote Meetings:**

- ✓ Are all participants able to hear and speak at meeting?
- ✓ Do all voting members have access to the meeting?
- ✓ Did we notify membership in keeping with constitutional mandates?
- ✓ How will we confirm a quorum at the meeting? Roll call of those present? Screen shot of participant list (accounting for possibility of more than one member per screen)?
- ✓ How will we confirm the identity of those calling into the meeting?
- ✓ Are we prepared to check drop-off or mail-in ballots against a list of meeting attendees?
- ✓ What do our governing documents say about e-mail ballots?



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS — AN OVERVIEW OF THE CALL PROCESS

**Who is responsible for keeping the congregation going until we have a new minister?** Your church council, in consultation with the synod bishop, will decide how to best provide for ministerial leadership and care during the transition and call process.

**Will we be able to save a little on the budget while we don't have a "real" minister?**

Probably not. The interim minister will be asked to do the same tasks your former minister did and will be paid on the same scale as your former minister. In addition, there will be some additional expenses related to the call process. This is a good time for each member to reaffirm their pledge to the common ministry and stay consistent in their giving.

**How long will it take before we have a new minister?** Each congregation will be unique. Factors include the length of the previous minister's tenure, any problems there may have been during that tenure, the clarity of mission among the membership, etc. Even the time of year can make some difference as committee meetings are more difficult around holidays and summer vacations. In an average congregation and under the best circumstances, the call process will take 6- 12 months.

**Can our old minister perform weddings and funerals during the interim?** As a rule it is better that the former pastor perform no pastoral acts in the congregation. This respects the role of the Interim pastor and helps prepare the congregation to receive its new settled pastor.

**How is our interim minister related to our call process?** Officially, not at all. Interim ministers have a limited call and will have been asked by the Bishop to refrain from "assisting" in your process. The interim's task is to provide regular continuity in the essential tasks of your parish life.

**Is there any collected wisdom about the make-up of the congregation's Call Committee?**

It's usually wise to find a way for the diverse interests and ages of the congregation to be represented on the call committee. Some councils ask for representatives of the various groups and committees. If there is any wisdom, it is to operate openly, encourage questions, and don't "stack the deck" in favor of one interest group over all others. 5-7 members is a manageable size and permits inclusive (male/female, different ethnicities, different ages, etc.) representation. It is recommended that no more than one council member and one transition committee member, if any, serve on the call committee- never as the Chair.

**What is a congregational self-study?** This is the responsibility of your Council. In most cases it will be assigned to the Transition Team. Though the task may seem impossible it can also be very satisfying because it results in a clearer sense of mission. Look forward to it as an

opportunity to gain focus on the future and take pride in the diverse gifts of your church family.

**We did a "self-study" just four years ago. Do we really have to do another one?** At the very least it should be reviewed and updated with some deliberateness. You may look much the same but the need in your neighborhood may have significantly changed. There is a Ministry Site Profile form that needs to be completed and submitted to the ELCA portal for use by the synod and candidates for your call.

**May I nominate a candidate for this call?** Yes. Any minister on the ELCA clergy roster is open to your call. Any congregation member may nominate a minister to the congregation's call committee. Since there may be an initial nomination of several candidates from various parts of the church, it is the task of the synod and the Bishop's staff to produce a manageable list of qualified candidates for you.

**We would like to consider our Associate Minister for the lead minister position. Do you have any concerns about that?** Generally speaking, it can be difficult for an associate to make the transition from a limited job description as associate to the overall responsibility of a lead position. The situation may still call for an interim ministry period in order to clarify the mission priorities of the parish. In such a case the associate might be among those interviewed for the new phase of mission in the congregation.

**In our last call process we had a great candidate but it was too expensive to fly her here for an interview. Aren't we practically limited to ministers in this area?** It probably will be more expensive to interview out of state candidates but this should not prohibit you from doing so. This is one of the big reasons to covenant to hold your church budget together during the change--so you can cover these important expenses. You will be pleased to discover that ways can often be found to interview candidates who want to interview. Remember, it is in the best interests of the ELCA to have some movement of ministers across synod lines. You are the party with primary responsibility for call expenses.

**Can we send a delegation to visit at the church of a minister we're interested in?** Yes. Good manners suggest you call ahead and inform the minister of your intention to do so. You may also want to be sure the minister is leading worship, etc. that day.

**If the minister comes to the congregation for an interview, will the rest of us get a chance to meet him or her?** Out of consideration for those being interviewed as well as for the congregations where they presently serve, the names of the candidates you are interviewing need to remain confidential. When you have selected the candidate you will recommend to your congregation for call, you may provide an opportunity for the congregation to meet this candidate prior to the call vote.

**So when it comes down to it, who makes the decision to call?** *When the call committee has reached a careful decision, they will forward this information to the council. The council then calls a special congregational meeting, according to the congregation's constitutional bylaws, at which time the only agenda items are call and compensation. The call requires a 2/3 vote by secret ballot and the Bishop must be represented at the meeting to attest the call. Assuming all goes well, the only remaining requirement is the signature of the Bishop on the Letter of Call. If the Bishop has been a part of the process all along, there is little reason to doubt the letter will be signed.*

**Who, how, when is the financial package negotiated? Do we dare offer a minister less money than the minister is making now?** *Details of the salary package are the responsibility of the congregation council. Some details will be known before the call committee selects a nominee. Other details must be worked out in cooperation with the candidate to be nominated, the Synod Office, and the council before the call meeting. If salary is less than Synod guidelines, the possibility of a part-time call remains.*

**After we issue the Letter of Call, what happens?** *Once the Letter has been received by the minister, they have 30 days to discern the call and respond. Your other candidates should be informed that a call has been issued and that they will be notified of the result. Only one call can be issued at a time.*

*Occasionally there will be contact with the minister to clarify details of the call. If the call is accepted, the call committee's task is over and the council handles the details. If the call is "returned" (not accepted) then the call committee reconvenes and reviews its work and the Ministry Site Profile, asks for new candidates from the Synod Office, holds new interviews, and nominates another minister to the council to take to the congregation for a call vote.*

For questions and guidance on the call process, please contact the Southwestern Washington Synod Office at 253-535-8300 or [swwsynod@plu.edu](mailto:swwsynod@plu.edu).