

# THE CALL PROCESS

## A GUIDE FOR CALLING A PASTOR (FOUR BOOKLETS)



### PASTORAL TRANSITION/CLOSURE

Booklet 1 in the Call Process  
(Congregation Council and  
Resigning/Retiring Pastor)

- Pastor notifies bishop of intent to resign or retire and sends copy of resignation letter to bishop (2)
- Congregation Council receives resignation – notifies congregation and contacts synod office (2)
- Synod provides Pastoral Transition/Closure booklet to council chair and pastor including “Pastoral Ethics for Resigning/Retiring Pastor” and assigns a bishop staff person (2)
- Meeting of Congregation Council with bishop’s staff person (3-5)
- Council oversees selecting/appointing and installing a call committee (6)
- Council sets date for congregational study and date for meeting to gather data for Ministry Site Profile. Council appoints person to meet with call committee representative to design meeting (7-9)
- Congregational study is conducted in congregational event by bishop’s staff person and a study report is provided the congregation (8)
- Council works with call committee on Ministry Site Profile in council input session (8-9)
- Call committee is trained by synod trainer
- Council works with call committee on what to include in a congregation/community packet (9)



### SELECTING A PASTOR

Booklet 2 in the Call Process  
(Call committee & call chair with  
communication to council & congregation)

- Call committee finalizes competencies/ characteristics
- Ministry Site Profile completed in cooperation with council (2)
- Congregation/Community Packet completed (4)
- Candidate nomination forms made available and received from congregation members (4)
- Call committee begins to receive candidates (may meet with bishop’s staff to receive first forms)(4-5)
- Call committee selects primary candidate (6)
- Background checks are performed and compensation and benefits finalized (6)
- Call committee determines best way to present information about candidate to Congregation Council (6)
- Call committee recommends primary candidate to Congregation Council (6)



### EXTENDING THE CALL

Booklet 3 in the Call Process  
(Congregation Council, Call Committee  
& Synod)

- Council and call committee plan meeting with primary candidate (2)
- Council meets & recommends extending a call (2)
- Representatives from council/call committee discuss with candidate and agree upon compensation/benefits (2)
- Council and call committee determine best ways to share information about the candidate with congregation (2)
- Council and call committee plan opportunity for congregation to meet informally with candidate (2)
- Congregational meeting is set to vote on candidate and compensation/benefits package and synod contacted (2-3)
- Congregation votes on call and terms of call
- Letter of Call /Compensation/Benefits form completed, signed by council chair and sent to bishop’s office (3)
- Council plans to say farewell to interim pastor and welcome new pastor (*Last booklet*)
- Evaluation of Call Process sent to synod (3)



### WELCOMING & SUPPORTING YOUR NEW PASTOR

Booklet 4 in the Call Process  
(Congregation Council and Ministry Support  
[mutual ministry] Team)

- Installation service is planned by council, new pastor and conference dean. Once date/time of service is set it is shared with synod office (2)
- Council appoints a ministry support (mutual ministry) team to work with new pastor (2-3)

# PASTORAL TRANSITION/CLOSURE

## Booklet 1 in the Call Process

(Congregation Council and Resigning/Retiring Pastor)

STEPS	Pg	LINKS TO RESOURCES FOR PARTICULAR STEPS	Pg
Pastor notifies bishop of intent to resign or retire and sends copy of resignation letter to bishop	2		
Congregation council receives resignation – notifies congregation & contacts synod office	2		
Synod provides Pastoral Transition/Closure booklet to council chair and pastor including “Pastoral Ethics for Resigning/Retiring Pastor” & assigns bishop staff person		<a href="#">Certification of Congregation Records</a>	10
		<a href="#">Pastoral Ethics for Resigning/Retiring Pastor</a>	13-14
		<a href="#">Certification of Financial Obligations</a>	12
		<a href="#">Saying Goodbye Well</a>	15
		<a href="#">Exit Interviews for Pastor and Congregation</a>	16-17
		<a href="#">Celebrations of Ministry/Farewell Godspeed</a>	18-21
Meeting of Congregation Council with bishop's staff person	3-5	<a href="#">Pastoral Coverage Prior to Interim</a>	22
		<a href="#">Frequent Questions About Calling a Pastor</a>	28
		<a href="#">Ordained Ministry in the ELCA</a>	27
		<a href="#">The Call Process at a Glance</a>	29
		<a href="#">Appointing/Selecting Interim Pastor</a>	23-24
		<a href="#">Contracting with Interim Pastor</a>	25-26
		<a href="#">Interim Pastor Not Being a Candidate</a>	31
		<a href="#">Rite of Installation of Interim Pastor</a>	30
Council oversees selecting/appointing and installing a call committee	6	<a href="#">Compensation Guidelines for Pastors**</a>	
		<a href="#">Rite of Installation of Call Committee</a>	32
Council sets date for congregational study	7	<a href="#">Ministry Site Profile **</a>	
		<a href="#">Tips on Completing the MSP</a>	34-35
Congregational study is conducted in congregational gathering by bishop's staff person & a study report is provided the congregation	8	<a href="#">Nomination Form made available to Members</a>	33
Council works with call committee on Ministry Site Profile in council input session	8-9		
Call committee is trained by synod trainer	7		
Council works with call committee on what might be included in a congregation/community packet	9		

\*\*Not printed in booklet – only available through Web link.



**North Carolina Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
 God's work. Our hands.

# PASTORAL TRANSITION/CLOSURE

## I. RESIGNATION OF THE PASTOR

- A. **THE PASTOR**, upon resignation, sends a copy of the letter of resignation to the Congregation Council and to the bishop.
- B. **THE CONGREGATION COUNCIL**, at a regular or called meeting, accepts the pastor's letter of resignation. The letter of resignation and/or a letter from the Congregation Council are sent promptly to the entire congregation. In this letter the congregation is notified of the ending date of service of the pastor and perhaps includes a word of thanks for the gifts of ministry that have been shared. Most pastors need approximately four weeks to complete ministry tasks and say good-bye.
- C. **THE CONGREGATION COUNCIL AND RESIGNING PASTOR** receive, review and plan implementation of practices out of the "*Pastoral Ethics for Resigning/Retiring Pastor*" and this booklet.
- D. **THE CONGREGATION COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON** contacts the bishop's office to communicate the pastor's resignation and its effective date and to begin planning for interim ministry. A member of the bishop's staff is normally assigned to the congregation within one to two weeks of this contact. The council chairperson, in consultation with the bishop's staff, arranges for appropriate coverage between time of pastor's resignation and the arrival of an interim pastor.
- E. **THE CONGREGATION COUNCIL SECRETARY** reviews the congregation's membership records with the pastor and determines that they are up to date. The synodical constitution specifies that the parochial records must be in good order before a pastor can be installed at another call. The form "*Certification of Congregational Records*" is completed and sent to the synod office.
- F. **AN EXIT INTERVIEW** may be planned by the Congregation Council. Suggestions for exit interview questions are provided. (*Exit Interview for Pastor, Exit Interview for Congregation*) The purpose of the interview is to evaluate the ministry, to identify areas of potential growth for the pastor and congregation, and to celebrate the ministry. If an exit interview is conducted by the council, please consider sharing a copy with the bishop's office.
- G. **FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS** between the pastor and congregation are settled. This includes any salary or benefits due. The pastor likewise settles any debts owed to the congregation. The form (*Certification of Financial Obligations*) is completed and sent to the synod office.
- H. **A CELEBRATION** is planned to mark the end of the pastor's ministry and to provide the opportunity for saying "thank-you" and "good-bye." A Service of Godspeed is appropriate to use as a part of the liturgy on the pastor's last Sunday with the congregation (*Saying Goodbye Well; Celebration of Pastor's Ministry/Farewell Godspeed*).

## **II. MEETING OF CONGREGATION COUNCIL AND BISHOP'S STAFF PERSON**

A member of the bishop's staff meets with the Congregation Council either shortly before or shortly after the pastor's ending date. The resigning pastor does not need to attend this meeting. Items discussed at this meeting usually include:

### **A. REVIEWING PASTOR'S CLOSURE WITH THE CONGREGATION**

Have records been reviewed, accounts settled, exit interview conducted, etc.? Are there any "loose ends" that need to be tied?

### **B. PLANNING FOR INTERIM MINISTRY**

### **C. REVIEW/SUMMARY OF THE CALL PROCESS (See "*The Call Process at a Glance*")**

### **D. PLANNING AND SELECTING DATE FOR CONGREGATIONAL STUDY**

### **E. PLANNING FOR THE SELECTION OF A CALL COMMITTEE**

The call committee may be established between this meeting and the congregational study, or following the study.

### III. INTERIM AND SUPPLY MINISTRY

The bishop of the synod, in consultation with the Congregation Council, is responsible for the pastoral care and leadership of the congregation in a pastoral vacancy. In order to fulfill this responsibility, the bishop, in consultation with the Congregation Council, appoints an interim pastor during the pastoral vacancy. Normally, the appointment of the interim pastor is made prior to the resigning pastor's departure or shortly thereafter. It may be necessary for some ministry to continue with the assistance of volunteer or temporary staff.

#### A. TYPES OF INTERIM PASTORAL MINISTRIES

1. **A TRADITIONAL INTERIM PASTOR** may be appointed to serve pastoral needs while a congregation is in the call process seeking a regularly called pastor. Normally, a traditional interim ministry involves part-time services of the pastor. Duties include basic pastoral support and worship leadership.
2. **AN INTENTIONAL INTERIM PASTOR** may be appointed to serve the congregation in a specific ministry of transition to help the congregation move toward the process of seeking a regularly called pastor. This intentional interim ministry may involve full-time or part-time services of the pastor to lead the congregation through self-examination, attending to conflict and/or orienting toward the future. Intentional interim pastors generally bring specific training to this ministry. An interim pastor appointed to serve a multiple-staff congregation would normally be from outside the congregation. If an associate/assistant pastor is appointed as the interim, then that person shall not be eligible for a call as senior pastor.
3. **AN EXTENDED SUPPLY PASTOR** may be appointed when the congregation does not anticipate entering a call process in the near future.

#### B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INTERIM PASTOR AND CONGREGATION

The interim pastor is responsible for oversight of the basic pastoral needs of the congregation. Such needs normally include emergency calls to members at home or in the hospital, pastoral guidance for the council and the congregation, catechetical instruction, pastoral acts, etc. Availability of the interim pastor for many duties may be limited. It is the duty of the Congregation Council to inform parishioners of the interim pastor's duties to avoid unrealistic expectations when the interim pastor is not full-time.

Responsibilities may also include guiding a congregation through tasks specific to the interim period. The council may need to designate persons or committees to oversee certain aspects of the congregation's interim life—such as the newsletter, care of the church property, and other administrative tasks.

Consultation with the church secretary and other staff will aid in such designations. In multiple-staff situations, it should not be assumed that remaining staff members take over the duties of the departing staff. A worksheet/sample contract and guidelines are provided (***Appointing/selecting Interim Pastor; Contracting with Interim Pastor; Rationale for Interim Pastor Not Being Candidate***).

#### C. COMPENSATION OF THE INTERIM PASTOR

The interim pastor shall be compensated for the time spent serving the needs of the congregation. The terms of such compensation shall be detailed in the agreement between the interim pastor and the Congregation Council (***Contracting with Interim Pastor***). The Congregation Council should refer to the synod's current "***Compensation Guidelines for Pastors***" ([www.nclutheran.org](http://www.nclutheran.org)) in setting terms of

compensation. Compensation for the interim should be commensurate with the responsibilities and hours the council expects that person to spend in the ministry.

#### **D. AUTHORITY OF THE INTERIM PASTOR**

The interim pastor may be a pastor of a neighboring congregation, a pastor under call to special service, a pastor on leave from call, or a retired pastor. During service to the congregation, the interim pastor shall have the rights and duties of a regularly called pastor. However, the synodical constitution (S14.17) prohibits any involvement of the interim in the call process. It should be understood by all parties that the interim pastor shall not be a candidate for pastor of the congregation according to Synod Council action Sept. 13, 1991 (*Rationale for Interim Pastor not Being Candidate*). Once appointed the interim pastor should be installed. (*Installation Rite for Interim Pastor*)

#### **E. CLOSURE OF THE INTERIM RELATIONSHIP**

Upon completion of service, the interim pastor shall certify to the bishop that the parochial records for the period for which he/she was responsible are in order. (*Certification of Congregation Records*) It is appropriate for some recognition of services to be arranged by the Congregation Council at the conclusion of the interim's appointment.

#### **F. OTHER PASTORS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE CONGREGATION**

The interim pastor should normally perform all ministerial acts within the congregation. Members of the congregation shall not call on the former pastor or any other pastor for ministerial acts without the express invitation of the interim pastor. The bishop will instruct the departing pastor not to return to the congregation to conduct services, including weddings and funerals, after termination of ministry there, unless there are unusual circumstances and he/she is invited by the interim or newly-called pastor. The former pastor should not return for pastoral acts for at least a full year after the arrival of the new pastor in order that the transition might be completed. This matter would be appropriate to discuss in the exit interview. This procedure encourages a congregation to begin growing toward the future rather than clinging to the past. *Pastoral Ethics for Resigning/Retiring Pastor* provides further guidelines.

#### **G. SUPPLY PASTORS**

The council president and interim pastor shall determine who is responsible for scheduling supply pastors in the absence of the interim pastor. The bishop's office stands ready, when requested, to assist in arranging for supply pastors. All supply pastors should be compensated for their services according to the current synodical guidelines (*Compensation Guidelines for Pastors*).

#### **H. EXTENDED CONTRACT PASTORS**

An extended contract pastor is appointed to serve a congregation that may not be seeking a regularly called pastor. This is a specialized type of ministry that will be defined by the bishop in consultation with the congregation.

## **IV. SELECTION OF THE CALL COMMITTEE**

### **A. PURPOSE OF THE CALL COMMITTEE**

This committee, seeking God's will for the congregation through prayer, interviews, consulting of references, and conversation with one another, recommends a candidate to the Congregation Council for their consideration.

### **B. MAKE-UP OF THE CALL COMMITTEE**

- 1. NUMBER:** The number of persons on the call committee is usually defined by the congregation's constitution. If a number is not specified in the constitution, then the Congregation Council shall determine an appropriate number of persons for the committee. A workable number of persons is 5 to 7. In most congregations the council appoints the committee. In a few, the congregation elects the committee. Care should be taken to follow the congregation's constitution.
- 2. CHARACTERISTICS:** Members of the call committee should be wise, prayerful, trusted, and able to make decisions as part of a group. They should reflect a cross-section of the congregation with regard to age, gender, length of membership, and participation in various ministries. All should be active, communing, contributing members who can find the necessary time to devote to the work of the call process. Each should have the ability to work as part of a team to discern God's will for the congregation.

## V. CONGREGATIONAL STUDY AND CALL PROCESS SUMMARY

### A. CONGREGATIONAL STUDY EVENT

#### 1. CONGREGATIONAL STUDY

A bishop's staff person visits the congregation to conduct a study. All members of the congregation are invited to share information, clarify needs for ministry, and explore the congregation's history and vision for the future. Study results are reported to the congregation. The information gathered is used:

- 1) by the bishop and staff in order to identify good candidates;
- 2) by the call committee as they prepare the MSP and interview candidates; and
- 3) by each candidate as he/she considers the call to this particular congregation.

#### 2. CALL PROCESS REVIEW AND IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

The bishop's staff person explains the steps in the call process and answers any questions related to the process, including the need for confidentiality for both the candidate and the congregation.

#### 3. INVITATION TO SUBMIT NAMES

Any person in the congregation who has suggestions of possible candidates may submit those names to the call committee chair (***Nomination Form to be Completed by Members***). The call committee chair then shares names of interest with the bishop's staff person for possible consideration. The synod then follows up on those candidates by contacting the appropriate synods and then the individuals to determine interest and availability. The call committee will get a report back on all names submitted.

### B. RECEIVE STUDY RESULTS

A written report of the results of the study may be prepared and shared with the congregation. The report is received so that the MSP can be completed.



## **VII. MINISTRY SITE PROFILE (MSP)\***

### **A. THE MINISTRY SITE PROFILE (MSP) IS AN ESSENTIAL DOCUMENT IN THE CALL PROCESS**

The **Ministry Site Profile** (MSP) is the ELCA document in which congregations describe their ministry and their search for a rostered leader. Congregations must fill out the entire MSP. The call committee can not be trained without this completed document. The Congregation Council will need to appoint persons to assist in the completion of the profile and schedule a special council input meeting to provide information not readily available from other sources. The entire MSP is shared with all candidates the call committee considers and with those candidates who express interest in the congregation by contacting the synod office directly. The summary paragraph in the MSP will be made available on the ELCA Web site for anyone interested. (*Tips on Completing the MSP*)

### **B. APPOINTING A TASK FORCE CHAIR AND TASK FORCE**

The Congregation Council shall appoint a task force chair to coordinate the completion of a draft of the MSP and lead the council input session. The task force may include the chair with one or two additional council members, two members of the call committee and additional congregational members, as needed.

### **C. THE COORDINATOR/CHAIRPERSON ARRANGES FOR RESOURCES FOR TASK FORCE**

The coordinator arranges for the gathering of readily available resources that can be used by the task force. The task force may identify other resources as they meet.

Congregations often use:

- Congregation study
- Demographics and congregational statistics from ELCA
- Annual parochial report your congregation completes for synod each year
- Congregation treasurer
- Annual reports of congregation
- Focus groups within congregation
- Interviews with committees and/or individuals
- Conversations with other local pastors/congregations
- Newsletters, bulletins and congregation brochures
- Exit interview from previous pastor
- Conversation with interim pastor
- Local resources: Chamber of commerce, library, AAA, business associations

### **D. THE TASK FORCE COMPLETES A WRITTEN DRAFT OF THE MSP**

This draft is shared with council for approval. Once the council approves the draft the task force's task is complete.

### **E. CONGREGATION COUNCIL SHARES DRAFT MSP WITH CALL COMMITTEE**

The council approved draft is given to the call committee with the council understanding that the call committee has final responsibility for submission and wording of the MSP. The call committee uses the draft in their training. After the call committee completes training they may need to revise some wording to thoroughly reflect the competencies and characteristics of the pastor they will be seeking. The call committee makes appropriate changes/additions and develops a final version. The call committee should share with the council the final document before submitting.

### **F. FINALIZED MSP IS SUBMITTED ON LINE**

The call committee submits the final version on the ELCA Web site. (See below.) All candidates the call committee interviews will have access to MSP.

\* If the congregation is in an intentional interim period or has not participated in mission/ministry planning they may wish to enter into a more lengthy and thorough Mission and Ministry Plan.

The **Ministry Site Profile** form is available at [ELCA Call Process](#).  
The form is completed and submitted electronically.

## **VIII CALL COMMITTEE TRAINED AND CONGREGATION/COMMUNITY PACKET DEVELOPED.**

More information on both of these steps in Booklet 2 – Selecting a Pastor.

## CERTIFICATION OF CONGREGATION RECORDS

# Congregation Records at the Time of a Pastoral Transition

[Note: A computer fillable version of this form is available on the *Resources/Forms/Docs* section of the synod web site under “*Call Process*”. ]

In anticipation of a pastoral vacancy,<sup>1</sup> I have examined the Parish Register of

**Name of congregation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address of congregation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of pastor:** \_\_\_\_\_

and testify that the records have been maintained in good order during the tenure of this pastor, in accordance with the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations which stipulates, “The pastor shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation, and shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod” (\*C9.12. [1999]).<sup>2</sup>

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(*Congregation Secretary*)

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

1. "The parochial records of each congregation shall be kept in a separate book which shall remain its property. The secretary of the congregation shall attest to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his or her hands in good order by a departing pastor before:

- a. installation in another field of labor, or
- b. issuance of a certificate of dismissal or transfer” (S14.15. ).

2. For a description of the contents of the Parish Register, see “*Maintaining the Parish Register*.”  
[www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)

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1988 Lutheran Synod Drive, Salisbury, NC 28144

## EXIT CHECKLIST

*This checklist is provided to assist congregation leaders, especially the congregation secretary, in determining that the congregational records are in good order and that the leaders know the location of important documents.*

### Required For "Certification of Congregation Records" to be completed

**PARISH RECORD BOOK:** Are the following records up to date?

Baptisms                       Deaths                       Weddings                       Communion  
 Confirmations                       Transfers In                       Transfers Out                       Others:

### PAROCHIAL REPORTS

Annual parochial records are kept where? Are they current and submitted to synod?  
 Pastor's record is kept where?

*Although the following items are not required for completing the "Certification of Congregation Records" they are very helpful to have conversation about before the pastor leaves.*

**RECORDS OF MEMBERSHIP:** Are there lists of: *(Where are they or who keeps them)*

Members in good standing                       Members in college  
 Inactive members                       Members in military service  
 Is the active membership list realistic? When was it last reviewed and updated?

### POTENTIAL MEMBERS

Is there any prospect list? Where?  
 Any adult baptism or adult instruction potentials?  
 Any families needing infant baptism?  
 Catechetical instruction list. What is the next step for them?

**CHURCH COUNCIL RECORDS:** List the locations of:

Current year's minutes                       Past year's minutes  
 Committee reports                       Parish goals, long-range plans,  
 Unfinished council business

**CONGREGATIONAL RECORDS:** List the locations of:

Minutes of congregational meetings: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Church archives: \_\_\_\_\_

**PARISH CORRESPONDENCE:**

Where is correspondence kept?                       Any pending matters?

**FINANCIAL CONCERNS:** Where are the following located?

Financial records                       What is process for paying bills?  
 Bank accounts (Who manages them?)                       Deeds  
 Endowments                       Insurance Policies

**PASTORAL CARE:**

List of persons in need of ministry  
 Particular problems needing attention  
 List of shut-ins

## CERTIFICATION OF FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

[Note: A computer fillable version of this form is available on the *Resources/Forms/Docs* section of the synod web site under “*Call Process*”..]

Upon the resignation of a pastor, the following policy of the North Carolina Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America applies:

*“The pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former congregation before installation in another call or field of labor, or the issuance of a certificate of dismissal or transfer.” (S14.16) and*

*“The congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. (C9.08)*

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

**This is to certify:**

1. That all financial obligations, salary, pension, health, death benefits and allowances, together with continuing education funds have been met and paid to the Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ up to the effective date of termination of services.
  
2. That satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations have been made by the Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church, located in \_\_\_\_\_.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Treasurer of the Congregation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Pastor**

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

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1988 Lutheran Synod Drive, Salisbury, NC 28144

## PASTORAL ETHICS FOR RESIGNING/RETIRING PASTOR

When a pastor accepts a call to a congregation, a sacred covenant is established between that pastor and the people of God in that place. In order that the ministry might be strong and effective, it is important for that relationship to be strengthened and nurtured until God calls that pastor to another sector of ministry. When a pastor resigns/retires, that covenant ends. How does a pastor relate appropriately to members of congregations where one has previously served? We provide the following guidelines, with the hope that it will give direction so that good choices are made which do not negatively impact the ministry of the people of God.

### Pastoral Ethics: For Pastors Resigning

1. It is your responsibility as a former pastor **to decline invitations to conduct pastoral acts in any former parish**. It is important that you do not pass the burden of such decisions back to the pastor who currently holds that call. If asked to function in a pastoral role, the best response is “because I am no longer your pastor it would not be appropriate for me to do that,” perhaps followed by “I will pray for you and would be happy to attend as a friend. Do not say “you will have to consult the current pastor.” That puts the current pastor in the no-win situation of either relinquishing the pastoral role to you, or appearing to be jealous and uncaring.
2. It is your responsibility as a former pastor to be supportive of your successor, even when that is difficult to do. If your ministry was appreciated, then you have great power to affect your successor’s ministry. If you can’t say good things, say nothing, and do it graciously.
3. While the above statements are addressed to pastors, **spouses of pastors** should consider the same factors, and also respect the recommendations made above.

### Pastoral Ethics: For Pastors Retiring

- 1) A retired pastor should not remain a member of the congregation served at the time of retirement. Transferring ones membership to another congregation allows the successor to assume pastoral leadership more readily. It also provides an opportunity for the retired pastor to enter more fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about the retired pastor’s role. (From Retired Pastors in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, adopted by the Church Council as policy, November 13, 1998)
- 2) Pastors considering remaining in the same community are to consult with the bishop before informing the congregation of this fact.
- 3) If in conversation with the bishop, determine that you must remain in the community in which you have served, it is especially important that you prepare the congregation well for your departure. If the congregation you have served is the only ELCA congregation in the community it will be important to plan to be absent during the months that the congregation is in call process, to avoid even the appearance of influencing decisions, and to avoid any leadership roles. Upon the arrival of a new pastor you should assure that person that you will do everything possible to be of support and help, including declining invitations for pastoral acts or assuming leadership roles in the congregation. If you are not able to be supportive, it is essential that you find a place to worship in a different community, or if necessary, a different denomination.
- 4) As is true for pastors who resign for other reasons, it is your responsibility to **decline invitations to conduct pastoral acts in any former parish**. It is important that you say “no, I am no longer your pastor, so that is not appropriate,” rather than, “I’ll come if the current pastor says okay.”
- 5) While the above statements are addressed to pastors, **spouses of pastors** must consider the same factors, and also respect the above recommendations

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

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

## PASTORAL ETHICS FOR RESIGNING/RETIRING PASTOR

### **Sample Announcements for Newsletters and Bulletins**

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*You should run these announcements several times over several weeks/months to reach as many people as possible..*

#### ***A sample announcement for a pastor who is leaving the congregation and community.***

After Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ leaves our congregation he/she will not be available to conduct or participate in events such as funerals, weddings, hospital calls, emergency calls, or any other functions normally carried out by a pastor in a congregation. Please call \_\_\_\_\_ to arrange for pastoral care.

#### ***A sample announcement for a pastor who is retiring and remaining in the same community.***

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ will be transferring her/his membership to \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church, and will not be available to take on any kind of leadership role within our congregation. Pastor (and her husband/his wife) may continue to socialize and maintain friendships outside of the life of this congregation. Please call \_\_\_\_\_ to arrange for pastoral care.

#### ***A sample announcement directed to congregational members:***

Saying good-bye is never easy. Now that Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ has left we need to be reminded of appropriate behavior at the end of a pastoral call. We have been served faithfully, competently and compassionately by Pastor \_\_\_\_\_. We have full expectations we will be served in the same manner by our interim pastor and the next pastor we call. It is not appropriate or ethical for a former pastor to provide pastoral acts in a former congregation. If you were to ask Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ to do so he/she would appropriately respond "It is simply not proper for me to do that, I am not your pastor any more." We need to recognize that the act of asking puts both our former pastor and our interim (new) pastor in a very awkward and uncomfortable position. So don't ask. You may invite former pastors to attend events as a guest, if able, as your other friends do. But please show respect and regard for our new pastor by allowing him/her to perform his/her pastoral duties.

### **Additional Resources**

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**Saying Goodbye** *A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors*; Edward White

Available from the NC Synod Heilig Resource Center or Alban Institute

**Critical Moment of Ministry:** *A Change of Pastors*; Loren Mead

Available from Alban Institute

**Praying our Goodbyes**; Joyce Rupp

Available from Cokesbury

## SAYING GOODBYE WELL

The best goodbyes are well planned. This is an emotionally powerful time for both your pastor and congregational members. Pastoral goodbyes are a time to celebrate what is best about the body of Christ. Think about how your congregation can do it well. The better the goodbye opportunities, the better prepared your congregation will be to move forward.

### **Some examples of ways of saying thank you and good-bye to the pastor**

*(Choose which ones are most appropriate for you.)*

- a. Meal/banquet with testimonies and/or roast
- b. Photo wall of ministry together – invite congregation to pull photos from their albums to add to the wall
- c. Thank-you note basket/box for individual thank you notes
- d. Small group dinners/gatherings recalling memories of ministry together
- e. Litany of goodbye during final worship
- f. Signing of covenants of support for one another
- g. Opportunity to contribute to a gift from congregation. What type of gift(s) is appropriate?
- h. Quilt gift with squares designed by different ministries in the congregation
- i. Slide/PowerPoint show to share times of ministry together
- j. Gift that reflects congregation in some way
- k. A series of events for sharing: funniest moments, moving ministry memories, special occasion stories, “walking with” stories
- l. Scrap book(s) of
  - i. Photos
  - ii. Letters
  - iii. Children’s drawings
  - iv. Newsletter stories
  - v. Community, as well as congregational activities
- m. Assist in the moving process. Help pack and box. Assist with meals once the kitchen is boxed. Provide a place to stay the night the moving truck comes.
- n. Are there ways to help the pastor’s spouse and children find good closure to their time in your community? A photo album of community schools, parks, businesses, and gathering places makes a nice keepsake for young people.

### **Other considerations**

*(Consider farewells both inside and outside the context of worship)*

- Are there important people (relatives, friends, community leaders, neighboring pastors, or past colleagues) who should receive a special invitation to a farewell event? Work with the pastor/family to determine appropriate persons outside the congregation to invite to certain events.
- Is the farewell a church event or open to the community? One church rented a billboard to say thank you to its retiring pastor and to invite the community to the farewell celebration.
- What kind of gift is appropriate? Some congregations encourage members to pool their money together to purchase a travel voucher or gift certificate. One congregation had an artist depict its pastor in caricature with scenes of favorite memories together.
- Will all ages have a chance to say thank you? How might the younger saints of God be able to express themselves?
- Think about a lasting memory you want people to have of your pastor, and make sure people get to experience that memory in a farewell event. For example, if a pastor is known for having a rapport with the youngest saints, then arrange one more time for them to have fun singing, learning or playing together at the farewell.
- Learn what worked well for other congregations in your synod that have recently said good-bye to a pastor.



## EXIT INTERVIEW FOR PASTOR

*(Questions for Congregation Committee to ask Retiring/Resigning Pastor)*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How would you describe the congregation when you arrived?
  
2. How would you describe the congregation as you leave?
  
3. What do you believe has gone particularly well during your leadership?
  
4. What did not go as well as you had hoped?
  
5. What are the major strengths of this congregation?
  
6. What are the major challenges of this congregation?
  
7. What ministry goals would you suggest for the congregation to strive toward during the next 5 years?
  
8. What other comments would you like to share?
  
9. What information from this exit interview should be shared, and with whom?
  
10. What can we, the congregation, do to strengthen and support the incoming pastor?
  
11. How can we help you to make the transition that is soon to take place?

## EXIT INTERVIEW FOR CONGREGATION

*(Questions for Retiring/Resigning Pastor to ask Congregation Committee.)  
(This is not a survey for congregational members but a conversation guide for a small committee and the out going pastor.)*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What has gone particularly well during the pastor's leadership?
2. What did not go as well as you had hoped?
3. What are the major strengths of this congregation?
4. What are the major challenges of this congregation?
5. Were there any surprises when the pastor (I) first arrived?
6. What goals does the congregation need to work toward in the next 5 years?
7. Any thoughts you would like to share with the pastor about his/her leadership style?
8. What can I do to help you in the transition that is soon to take place?

## CELEBRATIONS OF MINISTRY/FAREWELL AND GODSPEED

### **Option 1**

(Reprinted from *Occasional Services*, copyright 1982, by permission.)  
(You may wish to change from membership to call language where appropriate.)

1. Farewell and Godspeed is a public affirmation of the corporate nature of the baptismal faith, for use when members leave a congregation.
2. When set within the liturgy for Holy Communion, this order is used following either the Prayers (22) or the post-communion prayer (40).

#### **(Sit)**

3. A representative of the congregation comes forward with those who are leaving the congregation and addresses the assembly:  
\_\_\_\_\_ (NAMES) \_\_\_\_\_ are leaving our congregation, and we wish to bid *them* farewell.
4. The pastor or a representative of the congregation may make brief comments about those who are leaving, recalling the important events which have been shared with the congregation.
5. The minister says:

**Pastor:** In Holy Baptism our Lord Jesus Christ received you and made you *members* of his Church. When you *came to/were baptized in* this congregation we rejoiced to receive you into our fellowship in the Gospel. In this community of faith you have heard the proclamation of God's Word, which reveals his loving purpose for you and for all creation. You have been nourished at Christ's holy table and called to be *witnesses* to the Gospel. God has blessed you in this fellowship, and he has blessed us through you.

**All:** We encourage you to continue to receive and share God's gifts in \_\_\_\_\_ (name of new congregation) as *workers* with us in the kingdom of God.

6. The prayer is said.

**All:** Let us pray.  
Eternal God, we thank you for \_\_\_\_\_ (names) \_\_\_\_\_ and for our life together in this congregation and community. As *they* have been a blessing to us, so now send *them* forth to be a blessing to others; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen**

#### **(Stand)**

7. The service continues with the Peace (23) or the Benediction (42).

Notes on the Service:

8. When appropriate, the following or a similar statement may be made by a representative of the congregation

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ (name) \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_ (date of call) \_\_\_\_\_, we called you to be our pastor; to proclaim god's Word, to baptize new members into the Church of Jesus Christ, to announce God's forgiveness to us, and to preside at our celebrations of the Lord's Supper. With the gospel you have comforted us in times of sickness and trouble, and at the death of our loved ones. Sharing our joys and sorrows, you (and your family) have been important to our life together in the Church of Jesus Christ and in our service to this community.

## CELEBRATIONS OF MINISTRY/FAREWELL AND GODSPEED

### Option 2

#### RITUAL FOR THE CLOSURE OF A MINISTRY

**Congregational Representative:** PASTOR'S NAME, on DATE, we called you to be our pastor: to proclaim God's Word, to baptize new members into the Church of Jesus Christ, to announce God's forgiveness to us, and to preside at our celebrations of the Lord's Supper. With the Gospel we have been challenged to live lives of service. With the Gospel you have comforted us in times of sickness and trouble, and at the death of our loved ones. Sharing our joys and our sorrows, you have been important to our life together in the Church of Jesus Christ and in our service to this community.

**Congregation:** We release you from NAME OF CHURCH to share God's gifts as an ordained pastor in NAME OF CHURCH AND LOCATION.

**Pastor:** I give thanks for the life we shared in Christ. I have found our time together rewarding and memories of what we have shared will always remain precious and meaningful. I return to you symbols representing my role and responsibilities as an ordained minister in your midst.

- I have tried to proclaim the Word of God faithfully among you. Here is the Bible which expresses this. *(The bible is presented to a lay leader at the pulpit).*
- I have baptized people in the name of the Triune God, using water as a symbol of cleansing and rebirth. Here is water which symbolizes God's gift of belonging in Christ *(A vessel of water is given to a lay leader at the font).*
- I have celebrated Holy Communion with you. Here is bread and wine, the means by which we are strengthened in our faith and transformed into the Body of Christ. *(Bread and wine are given to a lay leader at the table).*
- Here are the keys to my office, the place where I have challenged, counseled, and comforted people. *(The keys are given to a lay leader).*

**Congregational Leader:** Prayer, both individual and corporate, is the means by which our relationship with God and with one another grows, deepens and strengthens. We will continue to pray for you.

**Congregation:** Eternal God, we thank you for PASTOR'S NAME and for our life together in this congregation and community. As he/she has been a blessing to us, so now send him/her forth to be a blessing to others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Congregational Leader:** We send you forth with a going away blessing.

**Congregation:** *(Arms raised upward toward pastor)*

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace, now and forever.

Amen.

## CELEBRATIONS OF MINISTRY/FAREWELL AND GODSPEED

### Option 3

#### ORDER FOR GODSPEED AND FAREWELL FOR A PASTOR

**Congregational leader:** Century after century Christians continue to take certain persons in the communities, set them apart and say, “You are our shepherd. Lead us to Christlikeness.”

**The community tells the pastor:** “We want you to be responsible for saying and acting among us what we believe about God and kingdom and gospel. We need help in keeping our beliefs sharp, accurate and intact. We know there are strong influences that would dilute or destroy our faith. We want you to give us help. Minister with Word and Sacrament through all the stages of our lives, in our work and play, celebrations and sorrows. This is what the church says to individuals it calls its pastors. Today we are not just saying good-bye — this is a time of ending.

**Congregational leader:** On BEGINNING DATE OF CURRENT CALL, Bishop NAME (or Bishop’s designee) presided as you were officially installed as pastor here at CHURCH NAME, *(Walk to pulpit)* You were invited into this pulpit. In this spot you have proclaimed the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ hundreds of times throughout these past FILL IN NUMBER of years. This pulpit has not belonged to you; the saving message of Christ is not something one can possess, but only bear witness to. You have been a faithful occupant of this church’s pulpit and messenger of the good news of God’s love in Christ. As you leave this pulpit we thank God for your preaching ministry.

#### CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!

**Congregational leader:** *(Walk to font)* At this font you have presided at the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Through the cleansing waters of baptism we welcome new members into the family of Christ. The gift of new life in Christ belongs to God. The church is the custodian of this rite of welcome, and you have introduced this congregation to many new brothers and sisters in the faith. You have presided as FILL IN NUMBER of confirmands affirmed their baptismal promises during your years with us. As you leave this font, we thank you for your ministry surrounding baptismal promises.

#### CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!

**Congregational leader:** *(Walk behind or to the altar)* At this altar you have presided at the Sacrament of Holy Communion. You have reminded us of the story of Jesus’ beginning of this meal. You have provided instruction to those who would receive it for the first time. The meal is the Lord’s, and this congregation has been provider of this meal to the baptized who seek to be fed with the living presence of Christ. You have presided over this meal so that it could be served in an orderly fashion. As you leave this table, we thank you for presiding at the sacrament of Holy Communion.

#### CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!

**Congregational leader:** *(Walk to the top chancel step)* Standing in front of this congregation you have led services where we thanked God for people who had died. You led us in the midst of grief while we expressed gratitude for God’s gift of life. You proclaimed the Good News of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and encouraged the community with the comfort of the gospel. FILL IN NUMBER of services celebrating God’s victory over death took place while you were here. As you leave this sanctuary, we thank you for being with us in our times of loss.

#### CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!

## CELEBRATIONS OF MINISTRY/FAREWELL AND GODSPEED

### Option 3 continued

**Congregational leader:** *(Standing at the top of the chancel steps)* It is here that you presided at services where couples were married. You were present to rejoice with those who rejoice. Thank you for sharing those and other great times of joy.

**CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!**

**Congregational leader:** *(Hold up keys)* When you came here in YEAR you received keys to this building. You have had a study here to do your work of reading and preparing, to meet people for small talk and big conversations. You have heard confessions and spoken words of absolution. Your study has been a place of prayer and preparation. As you return your key, we thank you for your prayers, your diligent preparation and your careful listening.

**CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!**

**Congregational leader:** It is indeed possible we will see you again, but you will no longer be pastor of NAME OF CHURCH. We ask you to honor that and help us to honor that boundary. You will continue to be a sister/brother in Christ's family and we will cherish that relationship. Thank you for journeying with us these years.

**CONGREGATION: THANKS BE TO GOD!**

**Congregational leader:** PASTOR'S NAME, you have received a Letter of Call to become pastor of NAME OF NEW CHURCH in CITY AND STATE and you have said yes to that new calling. WE want to acknowledge that it is not only that church calling you and you saying yes. We are sending you. You have been in our midst for FILL IN NUMBER of years. You have been part of this church family, sharing your gifts for the sake of Christ's mission in our community. We are proud to send you with our blessing. *(to pastor)* Please kneel to receive our prayers:

Gracious God, you have called us in our baptism to be your servants. You have enabled us to respond to your call as a community of believers. Thank you for the partnership in the gospel we have enjoyed with PASTOR AND FAMILY. Now send them forth to continue their work in another congregation and community. Strengthen them for the mission you have placed before them, and may they go from here knowing our love and our continuing partnership. In Jesus' name, Amen. *(pastor stands)* When we end our worship, you have often said to us, "Go on peace. Serve the Lord." Today we speak it to you.

**CONGREGATION: GO IN PEACE. SERVE THE LORD.**

**PASTOR:** Thanks be to God. PASTOR does the benediction.

## PASTORAL COVERAGE PRIOR TO THE INTERIM PASTOR

There is likely to be a short time of a few weeks between the leaving of your pastor and the coming of the interim pastor. It is the responsibility of the Congregation Council to work together with the synod office to arrange supply pastors to cover worship during this time. The council is also responsible for arranging with a neighboring pastor or a retired pastor to cover pastoral emergencies during this period. (hospital calls, funerals etc.)

## GUIDELINES FOR SUPPLY PASTORS' COMPENSATION

**Sunday Worship:** See guidelines at [www.nclutheran.org](http://www.nclutheran.org)

**Travel:** Travel at current IRS suggested mileage reimbursement rate.

**Accommodations:** Overnight accommodations if supply pastor is coming from outside reasonable commuting distance.

**APPOINTING/SELECTING AN INTERIM PASTOR**

**COUNCIL WORKSHEET FOR TRADITIONAL INTERIM MINISTRY**

The Congregation Council may use this worksheet to determine items that should be included in the agreement with the interim pastor. (An agreement with an intentional interim pastor may include additional items such as the leadership by the interim pastor in developmental tasks of the congregation.) Please bear in mind that the interim ministry is not necessarily full-time and some expectations for ministry will have to be met from within the lay membership of the congregation.

1. What do you understand to be the needs of your congregation at this time?
  
2. How do you see the interim pastor or other leaders helping meet these needs?

3. We would like the interim pastor to preach:

How many Sunday services a month?	_____
How many special services?	_____
How many weekday services?	_____

4. We would like the interim pastor to teach:

Confirmation classes	Time	Place
Bible Study	Time	Place
First Communion	Time	Place
Sunday Church School	Time	Place
Other _____	Time	Place

5. How would you like the interim pastor to be involved with council meetings?

When and where does the council meet?

6. What other meetings do you expect the interim pastor to attend?

Committee(s)	When and where?
Staff	When and where?
Other	

7. Do you anticipate any upcoming baptisms? Weddings? Funerals?

8. Do you expect the interim pastor to do counseling?

Baptismal\_\_\_\_\_ Crisis\_\_\_\_\_ Pre-Marital\_\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_



## APPOINTING/SELECTING AN INTERIM PASTOR

### COUNCIL WORKSHEET FOR TRADITIONAL INTERIM MINISTRY – PAGE 2

9. What visitation responsibilities do you anticipate the interim pastor doing?

Home visits\_\_\_\_\_ Hospital visits\_\_\_\_\_

Nursing Home Visits\_\_\_\_\_

Other (Describe)

10. Do you expect the interim pastor to administer home communions?

How often?

When?

In whose homes?

11. For what other duties would you expect the interim pastor to be responsible?

12. Who are some people in the congregation who can visit with the interim pastor in situations #9 and #10 above?

13. Do you expect an interim pastor to attend to these responsibilities in:  
a full-time position?

$\frac{3}{4}$  time?

$\frac{1}{2}$  time?

*(Interim pastors who are needed less than one day a week are sometimes paid on an hourly basis.)*

See other attachments for agreement and guidelines.

## CONTRACTING WITH THE INTERIM PASTOR

### **GUIDELINES FOR LETTER OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN INTERIM PASTOR & CONGREGATION**

#### **Developing a Letter of Agreement**

Each letter of agreement or contract will be unique because of the various needs of congregations and gifts and constraints of pastors. Developing a letter of agreement is an important first step. It says “Let’s be clear about our mutual expectations and let’s hold each other accountable to what we’ve agreed to together”. A letter of agreement should start with a conversation in which the Congregation Council determines needs and develops expectations for pastoral ministry during the interim. (Potential interim pastors will also benefit from conversation with the bishop or staff about congregational needs.) See the “*Sample Letter of Agreement.*” It may suggest areas for conversation and mutual agreement.

#### **Compensation and Work Needs**

Generally interims should be compensated on the basis of the previous pastor’s compensation or according to synod compensation guidelines. Circumstances of the interim pastor and needs of the congregation may allow for some flexibility in negotiating compensation. Some interim pastors serve in this capacity as their full-time call. These pastors may need to consider, with the Congregation Council, all aspects of compensation such as salary, housing, and contributions to medical and pension plans. Some interim pastors, particularly retired pastors, may have flexibility in some areas, and may not require contributions to pension or medical plans. Congregations who cannot afford, or do not need full-time ministry during the interim, might develop an agreement for a part-time commitment.

A congregation requiring services of an interim pastor for only one or two days a week might pay a salary of \$175-\$225 per day. If services required amount to less than a day a week, an hourly rate in the \$17 to \$25 range is appropriate. In these circumstances, the congregation and pastor may agree to compensate worship leadership separately, using the “Guidelines for Supply Pastors.” (see page 22)

#### **Professional Expenses**

Professional expenses are distinct from compensation, but also should be clarified in a letter of agreement. For example, business-related mileage (which excludes commuting) should be reimbursed at the current full IRS rate. Interim pastors who must commute long distances may discuss financial assistance to offset commuting costs.

#### **Evaluation**

Letters of agreement should contain a commitment to review the terms of the contract - expectations, compensation, etc. - every six months to a year. Not only does this encourage good communication and a sense of mutual ministry, it gives lay leadership good practice at ministry evaluation.

#### **Constitutional Requirements**

There are a few “musts” in a letter of agreement. First, this statement: “The interim pastor will under no circumstance be a candidate for call to this congregation.” This is synod policy. Second, the letter of agreement should have the signatures of the Congregation Council chairperson, the interim pastor, and the synod bishop.

#### **Scheduling Meetings**

It is helpful to have a first meeting with the Congregation Council to discuss roles, expectations, compensation, etc. Then the potential interim can work with the council chair to prepare a draft letter of agreement for refinement and adoption at a second meeting of the council at which the potential interim pastor may also present.

## CONTRACTING WITH THE INTERIM PASTOR

### SAMPLE LETTER OF AGREEMENT

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City / State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

The Reverend       (name)       agrees to serve as interim pastor of       (name)       Lutheran Church, beginning       (date)      . He/she will continue in this position until a new pastor has been called, or until the bishop, in conversation with the Congregation Council of       (name)       Lutheran Church and Pastor       (name of interim)       determines that his/her services are no longer required. Thirty days notice will be provided by the pastor or the congregation, in consultation with the bishop, before ending this contract.

The Interim Pastor will perform all official pastoral acts and ministry as agreed upon. For this he/she will be compensated       (amount)      , and will be reimbursed for transportation costs at \$       per mile (current IRS standard). Should the Interim Pastor be unable to perform a pastoral act, he/she will, in consultation with the council president, secure another pastor to fill in.

The Interim Pastor shall not be a candidate for the pastorate of this congregation. Also, the interim pastor shall refrain from exerting any influence on the call process of this congregation.

The Council President (or other member designated by council) will keep the interim pastor informed of the pastoral needs of the congregation.

#### INTERIM PASTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to pastoral acts, the Interim Pastor will be expected to do the following: (list will vary according to needs of individual congregations)

1. Be diligent in prayer and reflection.
2. Lead regularly-scheduled worship services and/or special services. (If the interim is not available for Sunday morning worship, supply pastors may be arranged through pastor supply list.) Honoraria for such worship leadership shall follow current synodical guidelines.
3. Meet regularly with the Congregation Council.
4. Visit the ill in the hospital and at home.
5. Administer at-home communion to the following shut-ins on a        basis:(list current shut-ins)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Teach.
7. Attend the following committee meetings: (list)

At the conclusion of the interim ministry, the interim pastor will certify to the bishop that the parochial records are in good order.

*(The letter of agreement is complete only with signatures of the council president, the interim pastor, and the bishop of the synod.)*

# ORDAINED MINISTRY IN THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

## ***INTRODUCTION***

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Pastors are approved for ordination through the candidacy process of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). They have been guided and approved by a synodical candidacy committee according to a process established by the Division for Vocation and Education. Once approved, candidates are eligible for call and serve under a “letter of call” issued by a congregation, synod council or ELCA church council. After receiving a first call, a pastor is ordained by the appropriate synod and joins the ordained roster of the ELCA. Pastors have met standards for service established by the ELCA and enter into a relationship of mutual accountability with the calling body as well as the synodical and churchwide expressions of the ELCA as set forth in the constitution, bylaws and continuing resolutions of the ELCA.

“Ordained ministers are called by God through the church. They are accountable to the Word of God for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are called through the church and are not self chosen or self appointed. They are called through the church for a ministry of servanthood and not for the exercise of domination or coercive power; ordained ministry is a privilege granted by God through the call of the church and is not a right of the individual.” (*Vision and Expectations: Ordained Ministers in the ELCA*)

## ***BASIC STANDARDS FOR ORDAINED MINISTERS***

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- Commitment to Christ
- Acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church
- Willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church
- Academic and practical qualifications for ministry
- Commitment to live in accordance with *Vision and Expectations: Ordained Ministers in the ELCA*
- Personal qualities including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships
- Receipt and acceptance of a letter of call
- Membership in a congregation of the ELCA

## ***PREPARATION***

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- Membership in an ELCA congregation and registration with the synod candidacy committee through action of the congregation’s council and pastor
- Guidance and supervision of a candidacy committee for at least 1 year prior to approval for ordination
- A Master of Divinity degree or the equivalent from an accredited theological school in North America
- Supervised clinical work and one year of internship
- At least 1 year of residency in a seminary of the ELCA and the recommendation of the faculty of that seminary
- Approval for ordination by a synod candidacy committee of the ELCA

There are also lay rostered ministries in the ELCA: associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CALLING A PASTOR

### **How long will it take to find a pastor?**

The call process varies in length of time from one congregation to another. It is difficult to complete the call process in less than 6 months and many congregations find it lasts a year or more. The length of the process depends on such things as number of candidates interviewed; the time call committee and candidates have available for conversation, and the needs of the congregation for grieving and preparation for the next pastor.

### **What will the congregation do during this time of transition regarding pastoral leadership?**

In a pastoral vacancy, the office of bishop, in consultation with the Congregation Council, will appoint an interim pastor who will, at a minimum, meet with the Congregation Council each month, provide emergency pastoral care, and make sure the confirmation program continues. The responsibilities of the interim pastor will vary and may range from a few hours a week to full-time, depending on the availability of the interim pastor and the needs of the congregation. A letter of agreement is signed between the council and the pastor that explains exactly what the interim pastor will be doing during this time.

### **What are the sources of names provided by the office of bishop to the call committee?**

The names of the candidates come from a variety of places, including:

- Pastors from North Carolina Synod asking to be available for conversation with call committees and having submitted rostered leader profiles.
- Pastors from other synods who have asked that their rostered leader profiles be shared with congregations in North Carolina. Candidates from outside North Carolina must be given clearance by their synodical bishops.
- Pastors identified by the bishop and bishop's staff as particularly suited for a congregation.
- Recent seminary graduates awaiting their first call.
- Pastors suggested by members of the congregation.

### **Will there be pastors willing to talk with our call committee?**

The answer is almost always "yes". In highly specialized situations or in part time ministry opportunities there may be fewer candidates to consider. In general, the Holy Spirit is able to bring gifts and needs together. A pastor often welcomes the opportunity to talk about ministry with a call committee and see what the Spirit has in mind.

### **Should we follow compensation guidelines?**

Yes, if at all possible. The guidelines are just that - guidelines. While not every congregation is able to reach or exceed the recommended figures, the guidelines serve as benchmarks to guide congregations and candidates in helpful conversation regarding what is fair and adequate. If compensation is far below guidelines, fewer candidates may consider the call to a particular congregation. In that case a part-time call should be explored.

### **Can we invite the candidates to preach in our congregation on a Sunday morning?**

We suggest that candidates not be invited to preach in a congregation where they are being considered. If a candidate preaches in a congregation, the entire congregation can become involved in the overall process and members are put in the position of deciding on that person's merit on the basis of worship leadership alone which is only one of many elements of pastoral ministry. It is often difficult for a candidate to be away from his/her congregation on a Sunday morning. Call committees often travel to the pastor's congregation or to a neutral site.

### **Should spouses of call committee members travel and visit with the call committee?**

This is not recommended. It is normally better for the call committee to travel and interview without spouses since spouses have not been selected to participate in the call process. Committee members need the freedom to interact with complete confidentiality as those chosen to represent the congregation.

### **Should there be alternate members of the call committee?**

We do not recommend alternate members; however, if alternates are elected or appointed, they should attend all meetings of the call committee and have voice, but should not vote unless a regular member of the committee finds it necessary to relinquish his or her position.

### **What if we have additional questions?**

If at any time during the call process you have questions, concerns, or ideas, please feel free to communicate with the member of the bishop's staff that is coordinating the call process in the congregation.

# THE CALL PROCESS AT-A-GLANCE

## PASTORAL TRANSITION AND CLOSURE

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### *Transition*

- Council receives resignation of the pastor and chair of council contacts bishop
- Council chair is given “*Call Process Booklets*” for guidance in the process
- Council/Congregation brings about appropriate closure with resigning pastor
- Council meets with bishop’s staff person assigned to call process \_\_\_\_\_
- Council and bishop’s office establish an interim ministry

### *Study*

- Plan for congregational study \_\_\_\_\_
- Call committee is appointed/elected according to the congregation’s constitution and installation planned
- Bishop’s staff person meets with entire congregation for study \_\_\_\_\_
- Congregation study report received by council and shared with congregation \_\_\_\_\_

### *Ministry Site Profile (MSP)*

- Ministry Site Profile task force chairperson and task force appointed
- Task force chairperson leads council input session
- Ministry Site Profile completed \_\_\_\_\_
- Ministry Site Profile shared with congregation

## SELECTING A PASTOR

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- Call committee is trained using Ministry Site Profile \_\_\_\_\_
- Call committee seeks God’s guidance as they begin interview process for pastor
- Call committee receives rostered leader profiles from bishop’s office
- Call committee makes contact with candidates shortly after rostered leader profiles are supplied through bishop’s office
- Call committee continues the interview process keeping in frequent contact with congregation council, congregation and bishop’s staff person
- Call committee narrows selection to one candidate, whom they believe has been led to them by God, and asks that person to be the primary candidate

## EXTENDING A CALL

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- Call committee recommends primary candidate to the Congregation Council
- Council meets with the candidate and makes a recommendation to extend call
- Congregational meeting is set.
- Congregation meets the candidate
- Congregation votes to extend the call and approves compensation and benefits
- Pastor discerns and accepts the call
- Plans are made to say farewell to interim pastor and welcome the new pastor

## WELCOMING AND SUPPORTING THE NEW PASTOR

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- Installation arranged with conference dean
- Mutual Ministry team is formed/approved

## RITE OF INSTALLATION OF THE INTERIM PASTOR

*Normally follows the "Hymn of the Day"*

### **Congregational Representative (CR):**

Today we begin a new pattern in our faith journey here at \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church as we welcome Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ as our interim pastor. In the coming days, let us support one another by our continued presence at worship, our sharing in the means of grace, and the words of welcome!

**All:** May God strengthen our community and relationships with power and new insight.

**CR:** Let us seek a renewal of our ministries through the naming of our talents and strengths as we prepare for the future.

**All:** May God help us to identify one another's gifts and open ourselves to their presence and challenge.

**CR:** Let us rejoice in the fruits of partnership in Christ Jesus as our \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church Call Committee and our Bishop Staff person \_\_\_\_\_, work together during the call process while Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ partners with our congregation council to provide congregational leadership..

**All:** May God grant us patience, a sense of humor, and the courage to speak the truth in love.

**CR:** O Lord, as your church has continually sought your will, sustain and inspire the work of the call committee.

**All:** May God's Spirit guide the decisions of this congregation.

**CR:** Let us ask God's empowerment of all leadership positions: the staff, Congregation Council, committees and all those who do good deeds and perform necessary tasks in this congregation.

**All:** Help us, Lord, to work together in harmony of Spirit and purpose.

**CR:** Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ will you lead, comfort and reflect with us during this time of transition?

**Pastor:** I will by God's help.

**CR:** To you, members of \_\_\_\_\_, will you support Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ in our ministry together, knowing that it will be brief – but the results enduring?

**All:** We will by God's help.

**CR:** Help us to value this time together as a reminder that our work continues, our Lord calls us to serve as disciples and empowers us by the Holy Spirit each and every day.

**All:** Lord, enable us to live our days in praise of your glory. Amen.

*The service continues with the Exchange of the Peace*

**Pastor:** May the peace of the Lord be with you always.

## **RATIONALE FOR AN INTERIM PASTOR NOT BEING A CANDIDATE FOR CALL**

When the interim is not a retired pastor, a question is often raised by a congregation and/or a call committee: “Why is it not a good idea for a congregation to consider calling its interim pastor to be the next permanent/settled pastor for our congregation?”

From the experience of those who have served as intentional interim pastors and those who have studied the issues involved in interim ministry, the following reasons provide the answer:

- A. Interim ministry is unique. There are specific tasks to accomplish during the interim that work at rebuilding. An interim pastor often leads in ways that are acceptable during an interim period, but may not be as acceptable to some in the congregation were she/he to remain as settled pastor. In fact, interim pastors are appointed for the specific needs of the congregation during transition, and those needs are not necessarily the same when the congregation is ready for a called pastor.
- B. Because the interim pastor has more visibility and has developed relationships in the congregation, an interim pastor has an advantage in knowledge and relationships over other possible pastoral candidates who may be more appropriate for the call.
- C. An interim pastor will always have a following, but also will often have those who are not favorably committed to him or her. If the interim pastor were called, there would be built-in opposition from the beginning.
- D. If a decision were made to consider the interim pastor along with other pastoral candidates, and the interim pastor is not recommended for the call, there could easily be hurt feelings that could jeopardize either the remainder of the interim work, or the start-up of the newly called pastor.
- E. The congregation itself may miss out on the appropriate leadership for its current stage of its life if it fails to consider a number of candidates who have gifts to bring.

Therefore, the Agreement for Interim Ministry expressly states that the interim pastor will not make oneself available for call, and that the congregation agrees not to attempt to call the interim pastor. When the interim pastor is introduced to the congregation, it should be made clear that the work of an interim pastor is distinctly different from that of a long term called pastor, and the interim pastor is not available for call in that place. Since members may naturally form an attachment to the interim pastor, it is often necessary for both the pastor and congregational leaders to remind members that issuing a call to the interim pastor is not permitted and both the interim and the congregation have agreed to that in writing.



## RITE OF INSTALLATION OF THE CALL COMMITTEE

*THIS ORDER NORMALLY FOLLOWS THE CREED IN THE LITURGY.  
THE RITE IS OFTEN PRINTED IN THE BULLETIN.*

*THE PEOPLE ARE SEATED*

Pastor: The following persons, having been chosen/elected to be the call committee, are asked to come forward as their names are read:

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Pastor: Saint Paul writes: There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability for some particular service to everyone. The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all.

You have been appointed to a position of leadership and trust in this congregation. You are to seek the will of God and the mind and spirit of the congregation with regard to our pastoral needs.

You will examine the qualifications of prospective pastors, interview those who appear to be suitable candidates, and recommend only one person to the Congregation Council for its approval and recommendation regarding the issuance of a call by the congregation. In all your deliberations, you are to be examples of faith active in love, seeking to maintain the life, harmony and ministry of this congregation.

On behalf of your sisters and brothers in Christ, I now ask you: Will you accept and faithfully carry out the duties of the call committee?

All: We will

*THE COMMITTEE FACES THE CONGREGATION, WHICH STANDS.*

Pastor: People of God, I ask you, will you support these, your brothers and sisters in Christ, in their task, respect their need for confidentiality and will you undergird their efforts with your prayers?

Cong.: We will

Pastor: I now declare you installed as the call committee of this congregation. God bless you and your work together in His name.

*HERE FOLLOWS THE PRAYERS AND THE PEACE.*

**NOMINATIONS FORM TO BE COMPLETED BY MEMBERS**

**Nominations for Pastoral Candidates**

The call committee welcomes your suggestion of possible candidates for our next pastor. Only a member of the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be nominated. All ELCA pastors, with the exception of your interim pastor, are eligible. The call committee will take all nominations seriously and share appropriate names with the office of the bishop. If a nominee is from a synod other than NC our bishop will obtain clearance from the nominee's synod.

Candidate Name \_\_\_\_\_

Current Congregation/Ministry \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Synod (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about this person?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you personally know this individual? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Please summarize why you feel this individual would be a strong candidate for our congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE: Once your referral is made, please support the confidentiality and integrity of the call process by allowing the call committee and Synod to have exclusive contact with the candidate for any matters related to our congregational call.**

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please give this completed form to the chair of your call committee.  
Appropriate names will be forwarded to the bishop's office for consideration.*

## TIPS ON COMPLETING THE MINISTRY SITE PROFILE (MSP)

- *Write the MSP carefully*  
All the information that will appear within your listing on "Ministry Opportunities" is drawn from your entries on the MSP. Write the MSP carefully, as if the whole world will read it.
- *Complete the entire MSP*  
Congregations are expected to fill out the entire MSP.
- *Involve others*  
Involve as many people as possible at your ministry site in thinking and writing about the questions of Identity/Purpose, Gifts/Resources, and Context/Needs. Begin every conversation with Bible study and prayer.
- *Give thought to the narrative questions*  
The most important questions are the narrative questions. Give them a lot of thought; especially **question 8** which will be publicized within "Ministry Opportunities."
- *Be clear and specific*  
Use the multiple choice options and narrative sections to focus the description of your site rather than to speak broadly or generally.
- *Contact information*  
Be certain to learn from your synod staff the name and contact information that you should use to answer **question 20**.
- *For multiple-point parishes*  
If you are a part of a multiple-point parish, the MSP can be used to describe individual congregations within the parish (choose "congregation" on p.1 of the MSP) or used to describe the entire parish (choose "multiple point parish" on p. 1). In either case be sure to clarify your cooperative arrangement on p. 13.

### Two supporting forms

1. *Seven Reflections*  
You may choose to enhance your MSP by providing additional information on the *Seven Reflections* form. The form can be downloaded at "Access Account" on the web site after the MSP has been submitted. The form is optional.
2. *Reference Recommendation*  
Each ministry site is required to provide an outside reference who will complete a recommendation form. The form contains within it the "Ministry Site Characteristics" survey just as the MSP also contains, creating an opportunity for the rostered leader to pursue some comparison and conversation. You can download the form by going to "Access Account" after the MSP has been submitted. The form is then emailed to the reference as an attachment. The *Reference Recommendation* form is a PDF form, requiring the use of Adobe Acrobat. The reference submits the form by clicking the "Submit" button at the end of the form. Use "Access Account" to monitor the arrival of this reference form.
  - a. *Selecting a Reference* – As you consider who you might ask to be a reference you might consider people in the following categories: A physical neighbor to your congregation, a local pastor, a community leader familiar with your ministry, someone from an agency you serve or partner with, someone from a community group that uses your facility, someone from a congregation who partners with you in some ministry.

## TIPS ON COMPLETING THE MINISTRY SITE PROFILE (MSP)

The chart below indicates what parts of the study process might help in completing specific portions of the MSP.

MSP ITEM	CONGREGATIONAL STUDY	COUNCIL INPUT SESSION
Programs, p. 4	Most important current ministries	
Goals, p. 4	In the next few years, I hope...	
Energy, p. 4	Most important current ministries	
Ministry site char., p 5		ministry site characteristics
Purpose, p. 6		congregation's purpose
Giftedness/obstacles, p 6	What might get in the way...?	congregation's assets
Mission priorities, p. 7	Most important current ministries	
	In the next few years, I hope...	
Top ministry tasks, p. 9		ranking ministry tasks
Gifts for ministry, p. 10	Our next pastor is someone who...	
Mutual expectations, p. 11	In the next few years, I hope...	
	Our next pastor is someone who...	