

DISCERNING GOD IN DAILY LIFE

Take a few moments and invite your memory to supply an event from your life that was important to you, that had some good stuff in it, some challenge, or led to a change of direction or perspective. Recall that event as vividly as possible. Use some (not necessarily all) of the focusing ideas below to intensify your awareness of what was going on. Consider them all, but don't try too hard over those that find no response in you.

The situation involved my being or doing...

Some of the feelings I was having were...

If this incident were a story of movie or soap opera, one or two appropriate titles might be (you don't have to be too serious!)...

I had a hunch that God was present or moving in this situation through or because...

adapted from the *Partners with God* program

TESTING FOR GOD'S DESIRE

Though we act boldly, we will also acknowledge that we sometimes, with all good intentions, act contrary to God's desire for us. However, there are some time-honored ways to "test" whether some proposed decision, act, or direction might be God's desire.

1. Does it look like Jesus?

That is, does it resonate with the Jesus of scripture, the tradition of the Church, or the advice of a wise mentor or trusted group of Christians?

2. What is the feel of it?

Does it have the "weight" of God's will on it?

Does it bring the peace of "rightness" or even the *disquiet* of the right change at the right time?

Lay it next to your heart for some time: does it bring "consolation" or "desolation"?

Am I acting out of invitation or compulsion?

3. What will be its fruits?

Imagine what will come of it. Do you see the fruits of the Spirit resulting from it?

Does it lead to balance or fragmentation in life?

4. Whom will it glorify?

God or someone else?

Am I acting out of my agenda or God's desire?

A MEETING LITURGY

If a committee meeting is “worshipful work”, consider building an agenda that flows like worship. Here are some ideas in a liturgical format.

Gathering

Serve light refreshments ahead of the meeting
Set up a visual focus for the meeting: open Bible, candle, a cross
Set up seating that allows eye contact between all participants
Honor those present by beginning on time
Check in: Each present responds to something like "One thing I hope for this meeting is...", "What I'd be doing if I wasn't here is...", "One joy I experienced since we last met is...", "Something that I have trouble laying aside for this meeting is...".
Invoke God's presence with hymn, scripture, prayer/silence. The purpose is encouraging openness to God, a spirit of thanksgiving, setting self aside.
Approve agenda, goals for the meeting.

Sharing the Word

Use biblical stories and biblical images to inform a current issue to decide.
Review and reaffirm a mission statement, a committee covenant, guidelines for interaction (how are we doing?)

Offering/Response

The business of the meeting, conducted in a way that business is an intentional offering of conversation, energies, decisions to God.

Going Forth

Clarify action list (who does what before next meeting)
Reflection time, e.g., "Where was God moving in this meeting?" or
"What happened tonight that helped us move forward or what seemed to get us stuck?"
Prayers for each other, the community, the world
End on time

Things to Do to Help Meetings Become Worshipful Work

- Ask someone to be in silent prayer for whoever is speaking in the meeting
- Conclude each formal report or major decision with a prayer of thanksgiving.
- Insert a time of silent prayer after each 20 minutes of difficult conversation or debate.
- Limit total time of meeting.
- Allow a time for personal faith sharing.
- Limit voting to minor issues. If voting is necessary on big issues, wait until a consensus is clear.

FOCUSING PRAYERS AND SCRIPTURES

O Christ, make us able, at every moment,
 to place our spirit in your hands.
While we were still searching for you,
 already you had found us.
 However poor our prayer is,
you hear us far more than we can imagine or believe.

--Brother Roger of Taize

Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

--Psalm 109

I searched for God, he came to me, and he saved me from all my fears.
 Look to God and you will shine: bitterness gone from your face.
A poor man called, God answered him, and freed him from all his distress.

--Psalm 34

The compassing of God be upon me,
the compassing of God, of the God of life.
The compassing of Christ be upon me,
 the compassing of the Christ of love.
The compassing of the Spirit be upon me,
 the compassing of the Spirit of grace.
The compassing of the Sacred Three be upon me,
 the compassing of the Sacred Three protect me,
the compassing of the Sacred Three preserve me.

--Northumbrian blessing

O God, make clear to us each road.
O God, make safe to us each steep;
 When we stumble, hold us;
 When we fall, lift us up.
When we are hard-pressed, deliver us;
 And bring us at last to Your glory.

--Celtic blessing

Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.
Establish Thou the work of our hands;
establish Thou the work of our hands.

--Anonymous

Pay attention; come to me;
Listen, and your soul will live.

--Isaiah 55

AN INVITATION TO CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT

Something like this could be used with the notification that the congregation council has recommended a candidate for call, and invites the congregation to a reception or other function to meet the candidate in preparation for a congregational vote.

It's pretty bold these days to profess to know God's will. In fact, many of us are inclined to be a little suspicious of people who too quickly and easily claim to know what God desires in a given situation.

Nevertheless, it is the task of the members of this congregation to seek God's desire in a very specific circumstance, the call of a new pastor

The call committee and council have gone about the work of discernment for some time, and now it's the congregation's turn. Here are some suggestions for your prayerful discernment in these last hours before you express in a vote your understanding of God's desire for a new pastor in this place.

- Pray to be “indifferent” to all but God's will. That is, ask God to help you let go of personal agendas and other attachments so God's voice can be heard above other interior voices.
- Since discernment is not a private enterprise, seek conversation with wise Christians.
- Pray with scripture. Romans 12-4, Ephesians 4, and Philippians 2 lift up the life of a Christian. I Timothy 3-5, II Timothy 2, and Titus 2-3 talk about the qualifications of leaders of the Church. Add to these your favorite scriptures that call us to remember a vision for God's reign on earth. These verses center us in God's grand desire for the people of God and the whole creation.
- Gather information *and* listen to your gut. Show up when the candidate is present for a reception and dialogue, and listen to both your head and your heart.
- Imagine God's future for this congregation and the pastor's place in it. God draws us forward into a time none of us have seen before. Imagine the challenges God has waiting for you, and ask if this candidate is God's gift to help lead you there.

In the few days before you vote, spend a few hours listening for God.

HELPING A GROUP WORK

Groups work best if they understand both their **task** function (getting things done) and **maintenance** function (attending to the health of the group, including the quality of relationships within the group). The task function is usually what the group has been organized to accomplish. The hospitality committee, for example, has the task to provide cookies and juice to a reception.

Task issues include membership, decision-making, productivity, and organization. All groups, regardless of task, also have a maintenance function. It is in the nature of human beings to desire, usually unconsciously, to have important needs met when they are with other people. These include issues of acceptance, control, and accomplishment.

Healthy groups attend both to task and maintenance functions. Here are some roles that individuals fill to help groups work.

TASK FUNCTION

Initiating—Proposing tasks, goals, or actions, defining a group problem, suggesting a procedure or idea for solving a problem.

Informing—asking for or offering facts and information; expressions of feeling, opinions.

Clarifying—Interpreting ideas or suggestions, defining terms, clarifying alternatives and issues before the group.

Summarizing—Pulling together related ideas and suggestions after the group has discussed them.

Testing Consensus—Asking if the group is nearing a decision; sending up a "trial balloon."

MAINTENANCE FUNCTION

Harmonizing—Attempting to reconcile disagreements, getting people to explore differences.

Tension Reducing—harmonizing and appropriate use of humor.

Gate-Keeping—helping to keep communication flowing and everyone involved; encouraging the participation of others.

Encouraging—Being friendly and responsive to others; accepting of the contributions of others.

Compromising—When your own idea or status is involved in a conflict, offering a compromise which yields status; admitting error; modifying your position in the interest of group cohesion.

Test and Set Standards—Testing whether the group is satisfied with its procedures or wants to hear new suggestions.

THE GIFTS I HAVE TO OFFER

Fan into a flame the gift that God gave you.

2 Timothy 1:6

We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us;

Prophecy, in proportion to faith;

Ministry, in ministering;

The teacher, in teaching;

The exhorter, in exhortation;

The giver, in generosity;

The leader, in diligence;

The compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Romans 12:6-8

Consider that God has given you gifts that will serve God as you serve on the call committee. Consider, too, that others have seen in you gifts that are valuable in service to God through the church; that's one reason you're here.

1. List here at least three gifts (talents, passions, expertise, aspects of personality) that might be useful in your service on the call committee.
 2. List here at least two gifts that are *emerging*, gifts that you would like to develop and work on.

(If you are having a hard time with this, ask someone who knows you well what he or she sees that you offer to the committee.)

EVENING DEVOTION

Session 1

Evening Prayers

Leader: Jesus Christ, you are the light of the world.
All: the light no darkness can overcome.

L: Stay with us now, for it is evening.
A: And the day is almost over.

L: Let your light scatter the darkness.
A: And shine within your people here.

Prayer

Blessed are you. Creator of the universe.
From of old you have led your people by night and day.
May the light of your Christ make our darkness bright,
for your Word and your presence are the light of our pathways,
and you are the light and life of all creation. Amen.

A Reading: Luke 24:13-32

Prayers of the People

Those present are invited to offer petitions aloud, concluding each petition with “Lord, in your mercy”. The group responds “Hear our prayer.”

Concluding Prayer

Lord, God of unity and strength,
we approach these hours
as a time of communion with you
and with each other.
May the spirit of prayer not only begin our work
but sustain it and conclude it as well. Amen.

THE FIRST CALL PROCESS

Acts, Chapter 1

¹²[After Jesus' ascension] they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, no farther than a Sabbath day's journey. Entering the city they went to the room upstairs where they were lodging: Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly at prayer together, and with them a group of women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

¹⁵It was during this time that Peter stood up before the assembled believers, about one hundred and twenty in all, and said: 'My friends, the prophecy in Scripture was bound to come true, which the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of David, uttered about Judas who acted as guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was one of our number and had his place in this ministry.' (This Judas, be it noted, after buying a plot of land with the price of his villainy, fell forward on the ground, and burst open, so that his entrails poured out. This became known to everyone in Jerusalem, and they named the property in their own language Akeldama, which means 'Blood Acre'.) 'The text I have in mind', Peter continued, 'is in the Book of Psalms: "Let his homestead fall desolate; let there be none to inhabit it"; and again, "Let another take over his charge." Therefore one of those who bore us company all the while we had the Lord Jesus with us, coming and going, from John's ministry of baptism until the day when he was taken up from us—one of those must now join us as a witness to his resurrection.'

²³Two names were put forward: Joseph, who was known as Barsabbas, and bore the added name of Justus; and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, 'O Lord, who knows the hearts of all, declare which of these two you have chosen to receive this office of ministry and apostleship which Judas abandoned to go where he belonged.' They drew lots and the lot fell on Matthias, who was then assigned a place among the twelve apostles.

Reflection Questions

1. What parallels do you see between the biblical story and your present story?

2. What were elements of the process to find a new apostle?

3. Are any of these elements appropriate to your current task?

4. Think of a few ways that you and the committee can listen to God "declare which of these... God has chosen" to be your next pastor.

THE PASTORS AND SAINTS WHO SHAPED OUR FAITH

Our relationship with God and God's world does not develop in a vacuum. Most people can think of a person, often a pastor, who had a significant impact, positive or negative, on their spiritual journey. This simple exercise is intended to help you reflect on a time when someone had such an impact on you.

Describe a time when a relationship with a pastor or another person helped reshape your spiritual journey, your understanding of God. Think, if possible, of some time with “weight” to it. Write a description of the event or time. Include details, feelings, etc.

The following questions are intended to help you reflect on the above event or time. You need not answer all of them if they are not relevant or helpful.

What made this a time of receptiveness or vulnerability for you?

What in the character of the pastor or other person helped this event or time be pivotal?

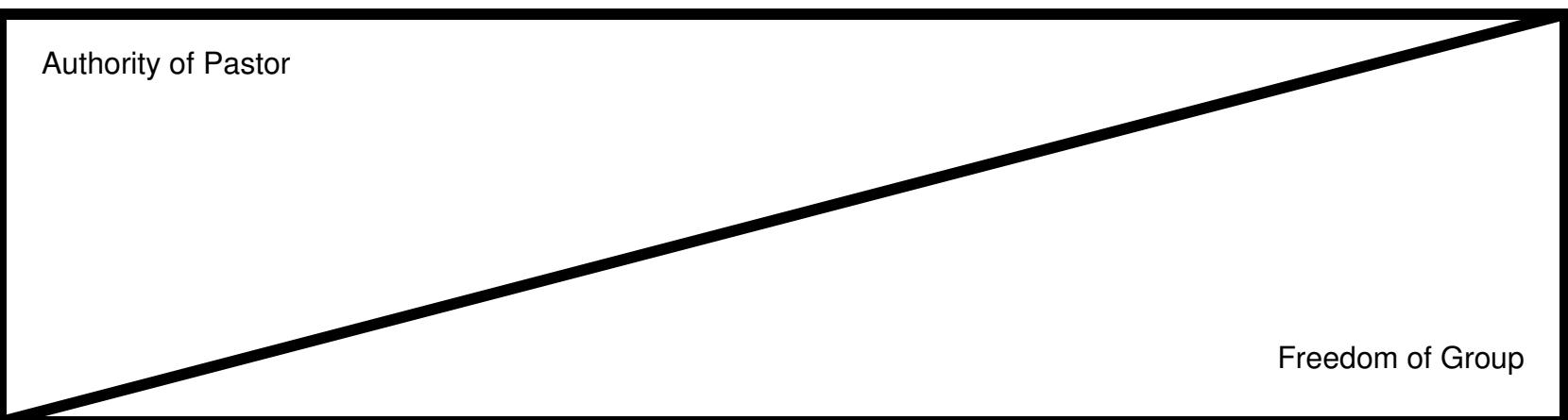
What difference has this relationship or time made in your life?

What characteristics or competencies in a pastor has this experience led you to value more highly?

A CONTINUUM OF LEADERSHIP STYLES

**Pastor-centered
leadership**

**Group-centered
leadership**



TELLING
Pastor makes decision and announces it.

PERSUADING
Pastor “sells” decision

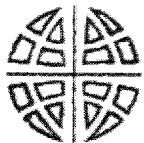
CONSULTING
Pastor presents ideas and invites possible revisions from group.

JOINING
Pastor and group engage in collegial decision-making

ENABLING
Group makes decision with pastoral input and guidance

FREE-REIN
Group makes decision, pastor blesses

Adapted from Tannenbaum, R., and Schmidt, H.W., “How to choose a leadership pattern,”
Harvard Business Review, March-April, 1958



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

ROSTERED LEADER PROFILE

The Rostered Leader Profile (RLP) is intended for use by ordained and lay rostered ministers (Associates in Ministry, Diaconal Ministers and Deaconesses) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as well as by First Call candidates for rostered ministry. It provides basic introductory information in anticipation of the candidate's interviews with call committees. Once complete, this form is submitted electronically to your synodical bishop for review and distribution to the selected synods, congregations and organizations of the church.

Date Completed:

Date Posted:

PART I: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. IDENTIFICATION

<input type="text" value="████████████████"/>	<input type="text" value="████████████████"/>	<input type="text" value="████████████████"/>
Last Name	First Name	Middle Name
Mr. <input type="text" value="████"/>	<input type="text" value="████████████████"/>	
Preferred Title <input type="text" value="████"/>	Suffix <input type="text" value="████"/>	Last Name at Birth <input type="text" value="████████████████"/>
<input type="text" value="████████████████"/> Full Name		

Preferred Contact Information

Address: <input type="text" value="106 Pleasant Street"/>	XXX <input type="text" value="████████"/>	
City: <input type="text" value="████████"/>	State / Province <input type="text" value="PA"/>	ZIP / Postal Code <input type="text" value="████████████████"/>
Country: <input checked="" type="radio"/> U.S. <input type="radio"/> Canada <input type="radio"/> Other	< If other than U.S. or Canada > <input type="text" value="████████████████"/>	
Phone: <input type="text" value="████████"/>	Cell Phone: <input type="text" value="████████"/>	
e-mail address <input type="text" value="████████████████"/>		
ELCA Roster on which you are listed: <input type="text" value="Candidate for Ordained Minister"/>		
Current Roster Status: <input type="text" value="Awaiting First Call"/>	Date of Candidacy Approval <input type="text" value="11/21/2008"/>	
Synod of Roster or Candidacy <input type="text" value="North Carolina Synod"/>	9B <input type="text" value="████████████████"/>	
If married, is your spouse rostered in the ELCA? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="text" value="████████████████"/>	

Language Proficiencies

Primary language: <input type="text" value="English"/>	Fluent <input type="text" value="████████"/>
Second language: <input type="text" value="████████"/>	<input type="text" value="████████"/>
Third language: <input type="text" value="████████"/>	<input type="text" value="████████"/>

2. EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL WORK HISTORY

Formal Education - Beginning with the most recent and in chronological order, list four degrees or credentials you have earned.

MASTER OF DIVINITY MDIV	Field of Study	2009
Degree	Field of Study	Year Completed
Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg	Gettysburg, PA	
School	City, State / Province (Country)	
BACHELOR OF ARTS BA	HUMAN RELATIONS WB	1984
Degree	Field of Study	Year Completed
High Point University	High Point, NC	
School	City, State / Province (Country)	
Degree	Field of Study	Year Completed
School	City, State / Province (Country)	
Degree	Field of Study	Year Completed
School	City, State / Province (Country)	

Life Long Learning Experiences

List up to five continuing education experiences that you participated in within the last five years and indicate the number of contact hours (50 minutes) for each. Be certain to include any Boundary (Sexual Ethics) Seminar or Professional Ethics Seminar that you have attended.

Year	Topic or Title of class	Contact hours
2008	Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance training for mandatory reporters	6
2007	Prepare/Enrich Workshop	6
2006	Human Relations Workshop	16
2006	Sexual Ethics Workshop	8
		0

Work History

In chronological order and beginning with the most recent, list up to five significant work experiences.

Organization	St John Lutheran Church		
Most recent position / title	Student Associate		
City:	[REDACTED]	State/Prov:	[REDACTED] Country <input checked="" type="radio"/> U.S. <input type="radio"/> Canada <input type="radio"/> Other
Years	2006	to	2007
< If other than U.S. or Canada >			
Organization	Wachovia Corporation		
Position / title	[REDACTED]		
City:	Winston-Salem		
Years	1986	to	2005
State/Prov: NC Country <input checked="" type="radio"/> U.S. <input type="radio"/> Canada <input type="radio"/> Other			
< If other than U.S. or Canada >			

Organization	Boy Scouts of America		
Position / title			
City:	High Point	State/ Prov:	Country <input checked="" type="radio"/> U.S. <input type="radio"/> Canada <input type="radio"/> Other < If other than U.S. or Canada >
Years	1984	to	1986

Organization			
Position / title			
City:		State/ Prov:	Country <input checked="" type="radio"/> U.S. <input type="radio"/> Canada <input type="radio"/> Other
Years		to	

Organization			
Position / title			
City:		State/ Prov:	Country <input checked="" type="radio"/> U.S. <input type="radio"/> Canada <input type="radio"/> Other
Years		to	

3. CURRENT MINISTRY

NOTE: If you are not currently serving in a ministry position, please leave blank.

FIRST CALL CANDIDATES should use this section to describe their internship site.

Organization	St John Lutheran Church		
City:		State/ Prov:	Country <input checked="" type="radio"/> U.S. <input type="radio"/> Canada <input type="radio"/> Other < If other than U.S. or Canada >
Current position / title	Student Associate		

Type of Position: Full time Part time

Community Setting:

Size: _____ Type: Suburban

Is this current ministry : a Congregation or an Organization

What is the ELCA Congregation ID number?	
Average weekly worship attendance:	More than 700
Total current budget:	More than \$700,000
Mission Support to the larger church:	More than \$50,000

Describe the organization or agency as to its purpose, size and relationship to the larger church.

PART II: COMPETENCIES or SPECIALIZATIONS

4. TOP TEN SKILLS IN MINISTRY

Below is a list of competencies that a rostered leader might bring to the work of ministry. This is not an exhaustive list, but the list covers most of the essential skills in ministry. Using this list, choose five areas that you believe are part of your expertise (that is, your best skills) and five additional skills that are clearly strengths (good skills). Please list them in priority order in the boxes below

Administration	Building a Sense of Community	Campus / Young Adult Ministry	Chaplaincy	Children's Ministry
Christian Education	Communications / Media	Community Organizing	Conflict Management	Counseling / Social Work
Early Childhood Administration	Ecumenical Work	Evangelism / Mission	Financial Management	Global Mission
Innovation / Creativity	Interim Ministry	Interpret Theology	Inter-personal Climate	Ministry in Crisis
Ministry in Daily Life	Ministry with Seniors	Multicultural Ministry	Music / Worship / Arts	Outdoor/Camping Ministry
Parish Nurse / Health	Participant in the Larger Church	Pastoral Care and Visitation	Preaching / Worship Leadership	Public Policy / Advocacy
Recruit and Equip Leaders	Self-Care / Family Life	Small Group Ministry	Social Ministry	Spiritual Formation / Direction
Stewardship	Strategic Mission Planning	Teaching	Volunteer Coordination	Youth and Family Ministry

Do not use a skill area more than once. List them in priority order.

Areas of Expertise (best skills)

That is, demonstrated ability and experience.

Areas of Strength (good skills)

That is, developing ability and experience.

Areas of Expertise

1. Preaching / Worship Leadership
2. Pastoral Care and Visitation
3. Evangelism / Mission
4. Teaching
5. Strategic Mission Planning

Areas of Strength

1. Public Policy / Advocacy
2. Community Organizing
3. Spiritual Formation / Direction
4. Multicultural Ministry
5. Ecumenical Work

5. EXAMPLES OF COMPETENCIES

Listed below are the five areas of expertise and experience that you have chosen. Provide examples of your work in each area which demonstrate your abilities.

1) Preaching / Worship Leadership

An example of this ability is:

After actively engaging the text, I strive to link how we as hearers in our context can relate to the biblical message. Relating to the text is different based on the congregation, and through my field experiences in seminary, I have been granted the opportunity to preach in a variety of locations. For example, I preached in smaller, more rural congregations in my first and second years. On internship, I served in a large congregation with multiple worship services - small, intimate mid-week gatherings and larger traditional and contemporary Saturday and Sunday morning services. Leadership in each of these required some differentiation, all directed towards worshipping our loving God in that particular time and place. In either setting, preaching the Word of God was the central focus and through the spoken Word, we all engaged as children of God, hearing God's word for our lives.

2) Pastoral Care and Visitation

An example of this ability is:

When I visit with people, whether in nursing homes, hospitals or their homes, we form a relationship through the conversations that we have. Christ calls us in our baptism to live our lives in relationship with one another, and as I visit with people and hear their stories, I also hear how God is active in daily life. Through my experiences in chaplaincy at [REDACTED] Medical Center and on internship, I met a variety of people in a many different circumstances - some stressful and some filled with joy. Being present with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in these times is a gift from God, and I am humbled by how God uses me in this part of ministry. An additional opportunity God grants us to get to know one another and to build a relationship together is in the everyday places of our lives.

3) Evangelism / Mission

An example of this ability is:

While some may shy away from evangelism and mission, when we talk to others about our faith, when we work together with people in our community, and as we go about doing our everyday tasks, we are doing evangelism and mission. While on internship I found that as I worked with the emergency homeless shelter, as I encountered people on the streets, and as I met people in the most common places God presented me with an opportunity to witness to the saving actions of Christ in our world. Bound together by the love of Christ, we can all do likewise and love our neighbor in Christ's name to the glory of God. Our biggest challenge is listening to how God is calling us to action and then prayerfully going where the Holy Spirit is leading us.

4) Teaching

An example of this ability is:

Teaching is more than a leader standing in front of a group and lecturing on a particular topic. When we share our experiences and discuss topics and issues, we learn together. Typically as I lead Bible Study, Sunday School classes, confirmation classes, or sessions on other special topics, I ask a lot of questions to give people an opportunity to share their experiences and engage in discussion. Small group interactions, such as I experienced in my home congregation provide the ideal atmosphere for learning, particularly for Bible Study, where we can listen to the Gospel and how it is speaking to us today. I also experienced on internship, that the same type of atmosphere can occur in larger groups as we all enter into our learning journey together.

5) Strategic Mission Planning

An example of this ability is:

In both my home and internship congregations, I was involved in strategic planning activities as those congregations began the task of discerning the mission to which God was calling them. In those situations, we focused on learning from our perceived strengths, our areas for opportunity and growth, our God-given gifts for ministry and our hopes and dreams for the life of our congregation. Assembling people from a cross-section of the congregation allowed for a diverse perspective as we went through the process. Coupled with Bible study and prayer, the power of discernment led us down a fulfilling path of understanding not only our mission in a particular context but strategies for making that mission very real in our lives. In our working together we also learned a tremendous amount about ourselves and became a closer group of God's gathered people.

6. REFERENCES

In addition to your synodical bishop, please list four people who know you and your ministry well - a clergy person, a lay person in your current or most recent ministry setting, a lay person who is not a member of your current ministry setting, and a colleague who knows you well.

Synodical Bishop

The Rev. Doctor Leonard Bolick	North Carolina Synod	9B
Name	Synod	
(704) 633-4861	() -	lbolick@nclutheran.org
Day Phone Number	Evening Phone Number	e-mail address

An ELCA clergy person

Rev. Derek A. Boggs	First Lutheran Church, Lexington, NC	
Name	Ministry setting / Location	
(336) 248-6018	(336) 787-3322	
Day Phone Number	Evening Phone Number	e-mail address

A lay person in your current or most recent ministry setting

[REDACTED]		
Name		
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church		
Organization and Title	[REDACTED]	
Day Phone Number	Evening Phone Number	e-mail address

A lay person who is NOT a member of your current ministry setting

[REDACTED]		
Name		
Retired		
Organization and Title	[REDACTED]	
Day Phone Number	Evening Phone Number	e-mail address

Your supervisor or a colleague who knows you well

Rev. Guy Edmiston, Bishop Emeritus		
Name		
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church		
Organization and Title	[REDACTED]	
Day Phone Number	Evening Phone Number	e-mail address

7. REFERENCE'S RECOMMENDATION

FIRST CALL CANDIDATES: A Reference Recommendation does not need to be identified.

Please provide the name of a lay person who is able to observe you in your current ministry and is willing to offer a brief recommendation. Your reference will be asked to complete a questionnaire and offer comments on your ministry.

Name of reference who has agreed to do this.

[REDACTED]		
Phone:	() -	e-mail address

PART III: REFLECTIONS ON MINISTRY

8. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Respond to each of the six questions below. Your responses are limited to approximately 150 words for each question.

Calling: You are called as a Child of God and into rostered service in this church. Reflect theologically on your sense of call and the way it shapes your life and work.

We are all called through baptism into service in Christ's church on earth. For me particularly, this calling is the basis upon which I lead my life. Before God called me into discerning the ordained ministry, God first gave me gifts to be used in ministry, nurtured me in my God-given faith, and prepared me for my calling as a Child of God. As God called me into the ministry, I knew that I was taking a journey that would be led by God, according to God's steadfast love. It has been a delightful journey that continues to bring challenges and opportunities for service to the church. My prayer is always that I will listen for the Spirit's guidance as I continue to discern how God will use me and my gifts in ministry going forward.

Convictions: Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your speaking, teaching, leading and living.

There is no greater conviction that I have than my faith in the cross of Jesus Christ - through which humanity was brought back into relationship with our loving God solely through the initiative of God. If we lose sight of God's actions in Christ, then we not only risk claiming God's work as our own, we risk turning Christ's suffering, death and resurrection into nothing. In the same way, I believe that it is through the Holy Spirit's calling that we all minister in the name of Jesus Christ. That Spirit was infused in us at our baptism and serves as our guide and comforter on our faith journey. The cross of Christ and the Holy Spirit's presence enables us to feel God's presence in the midst of our suffering and to bring that very presence into God's world.

Context: Describe the ministry setting(s) that would energize you and make the best use of your gifts, skills and passions.

Ministry happens in a variety of settings and God has granted me gifts that can be used in this diversity. In whatever place God calls me, openness to God's call on our lives, understanding that we are called to continually listen for God's guidance as we work together to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and faithfully using our God-given gifts in ministry describes the place in which I am energized. Our world has changed greatly over the past decades, and while for some this can mean that ministry appears to be too hard to do, I feel that these changes allow us to listen for God's guidance and to meet our challenging new world in what may be very new ways. Our joining together, working jointly in advancing God's kingdom, is the key response we all have to what God has done for us through Jesus Christ.

Accomplishments: How has your current ministry setting developed in the last three years, and in what ways have you contributed to this growth or development?

FIRST CALL CANDIDATES for ministry may reflect upon experiences during internship.

I entered internship with some trepidation as I was placed in a large congregation with a rich history and tradition. However, that trepidation quickly faded as I was welcomed into this congregation as a joint worker in Christ's church in that place. I learned, through the relationships we formed, through worshipping together, through the struggles we faced, that the steadfast love of God was ever-present, supporting us as we served in God's kingdom together. Building those relationships, learning from each other, and taking risks together as our ministry unfolded allowed us to bring the face of Christ into a hurting world - in delivering meals to the hungry, in providing shelter from those who were cold, and in loving those whom society had abandoned. That's the power of the Spirit's leading - and for that I give thanks to God.

Denominational Relationship: What are your hopes for the ELCA? Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

I pray that the ELCA continues in its efforts to discern its missional responsibility in bringing God's Word to a world that so desperately needs to hear the hope of the Gospel. As a part of the wider church, each congregation plays its part in the broader ministry of the church - engaging in the work of the synod and the national church. There is so much that can be accomplished as we all work together in God's ministry - each doing its own part for which God has gifted it. This unity of purpose between the national church, the synod and each individual congregation translates into a consistent witness to the saving actions of Christ - a witness to which we have all been called and enter into with a sense of servant leadership understanding that we are here to serve, not to be served.

Public Ministry: In your public role as a leader within the congregation or organization, how would you describe your preferred approach, style and manner?

I prefer working along-side others instead of in a hierarchical, rigidly structured environment. When people come together, share their individual gifts and abilities, and work towards a common goal, much more is accomplished, and more so to the glory of God, than when we work independently as individuals. Helping people discover their God-given talents and using those to the best of their God-given abilities is one of the gifts that God has bestowed upon me. I am open to questions, like to engage in discussions and want to hear from a variety of perspectives. Through this process, we can consider many different options, make a more informed decision and then we are better able to minister in Christ's name as a unified Body of Christ. This approach is helpful within our particular congregation as well as with our sisters and brothers from other denominations.

9. PERSONAL MINISTRY STATEMENT

In fifty words or less, describe your vision of your calling in ministry and your passion for ministry.

Ministry is understanding who we are (in terms of our gifts and abilities) and whose we are - God's children, claimed at baptism, called into service, gathered to hear of God's love through God's Word, and sent into God's creation to bring hope in the resurrected Jesus Christ to the world.

PART IV: CANDIDATE COMMENTARY

The Candidate Commentary is an optional component that allows you to expand your Rostered Leader Profile with information that reveals your passions for ministry, your expertise, your experience or your visions for ministry. You are invited to be creative as you add any commentary that you feel will support this RLP.

If requested, are you able to supply the following items?

- Video recording of a worship, preaching, teaching or speaking occasion? Yes No
- Audio recording of a worship, preaching, teaching or speaking occasion? Yes No
- Most recent Congregation / Organization Annual Report? Yes No
- Samples of writing or communication pieces from your ministry? Yes No
- Letters of Reference? Yes No
- Résumé or *curriculum vitae*? Yes No

10. COMMENTS or EXPLANATIONS (For use in reference to any response made on this form.)

<http://www.elca.org/call>

11. DISCLOSURE

Out of care for the church, the following questions are asked of all rostered leaders and First Call candidates who are making themselves available for conversation with call committees.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	A. Have you ever engaged in, been accused of, charged with, or convicted of illegal conduct or a crime, including conduct resulting in suspension or revocation of your driver's license?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	B. Do you have any addictive behavior, including a history of drug, alcohol, or pornographic addictions that might interfere with your ability to serve or continue serving as a rostered leader?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	C. Have you ever engaged in, been accused of, investigated for, sued, or charged with sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, substance abuse, child or spousal neglect or abuse, or financial improprieties?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	D. While in candidacy or on the roster, have you ever engaged in, been accused of, investigated for, charged with, or disciplined for any conduct proscribed in <i>Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline</i> ?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	E. Are you living in accord with <i>Vision and Expectations</i> and <i>Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline</i> for rostered persons in the ELCA and do you intend to continue to live in compliance?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	F. Have you ever engaged in any behavior or been involved in any situations that, if they became known to the church, might seriously damage your ability to begin or continue in ministry?

Comments or explanations to Disclosure questions from the previous page:

[REDACTED]

12. CERTIFICATION

I, [REDACTED] certify that the information contained in this Rostered Leader Profile which is dated 11/28/2008 is correct and accurate to the best of my knowledge. If there are any significant changes, I will update this form promptly. I further certify that I have agreed to, signed and forwarded the Authorization and Release (Section 14) of this Rostered Leader Profile.



AGREE



DISAGREE

Your agreement constitutes your signature certifying this information.

13. REVIEWED

[REDACTED]	is a	
Candidate for Ordained Minister	of the North Carolina Synod	9B
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.		
This person's <u>Rostered Leader Profile</u> dated 11/28/2008		was reviewed by Bishop
The Rev. Doctor Leonard Bolick	on / /	
Signature		
[REDACTED]		

Call or Search Committees from congregations or organizations may forward this page to those references and others who are being asked for a recommendation or comment.

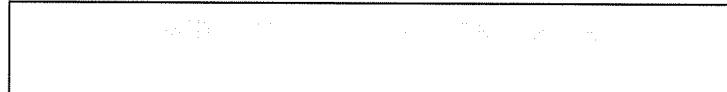
FIRST CALL CANDIDATES: Please note -

A signed copy of this page MUST be on file with the synod in which you are a candidate. After assignment, you will also need to send a signed copy of this page to the synod to which you are assigned.

14. AUTHORIZATION AND RELEASE

I, [REDACTED] authorize any references, supervisors, ELCA agencies, or any other person or organization to give the congregation, agency, institution or organization any information (including opinions) regarding my character and fitness for ministry. I also release any individual, employer, congregation, ELCA agency, institution, organization, or official, reference, or any other person or organization providing information, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may exist at any time on account of compliance or any attempts to comply with this authorization, excepting only the communication of knowingly false information.

A facsimile, photocopy or electronic copy of this Authorization and Release shall be valid as the original.

A rectangular box used for redacting a signature.

Signature

Date

BEHAVIOR-BASED INTERVIEWING

Call committees should resist the temptation to ask only questions that require the opinion or beliefs of the candidate. The committee will benefit instead by developing ahead of time “behavior-based” questions that will help committee members understand the candidate’s competencies for the position. These questions will encourage the candidate to share “real world” experiences and to reflect on learnings from those experiences. (Questions of candidates in the interview focus on competencies. Characteristics are typically *observed* during time together. It is important, however, that committee members check out with each other their observations of a candidate’s characteristics after the interview.) The assumption in this kind of interviewing is that the past behavior of candidates is the best indicator of their future behavior. Further, the responses candidates give in the interview should be consistent with information shared when checking references.

SOME EXAMPLES

If the desired competency is “manages conflict”, the committee might say to a candidate, “Tell us in detail about a time in a previous parish when conflict arose, and describe your role in that conflict. Be specific about the circumstances, your response, and what you learned in reflecting back on the situation.”

If the desired competency is “clearly articulates Christian faith”, the committee might say “Give us an example of a specific time when someone came to you with a crisis of faith. Tell us your response and why you responded in the way you did. What was the outcome of your involvement in this person’s crisis of faith?” This competency can also be addressed by listening to a sermon, in person (typically after the first interview) and/or by video or audio tape.

“Hot button” issues:

In some congregations, particular issues, most recently issues around sexuality, have risen to such a level that the candidate’s position becomes relevant. Asking “Under what circumstances would you bless a same-sex union?” may elicit a position. And it’s an appropriate question. But it is at least as important to know how a candidate deals with contentious issues, leading to a question like this: “This church is struggling with how we should respond to the current church-wide discussion about homosexuality. We have people who believe strongly, and differently. Give us an example of how you helped a congregation deal with a highly charged issue. Be as specific as possible.”

SHARING INFORMATION WITH CANDIDATES

The committee should not leave the entire responsibility of sharing information with the candidate to the candidate in the interview and less formal contacts. The candidate will likely also gather information from other sources, including annual reports, online information, the written self-study report, and conversation with synod staff, area pastors, and perhaps, former pastors. The section, “Congregation and Community Packet”, in booklet two *Call Process Guide*, 2010 edition, has a good list of information items to share with candidates.

However, the committee can be even more proactive in sharing information about the congregation that will help the candidate discern whether a call might be present. Normally, the Ministry Site Profile and congregational study will be sent to candidates by the synod’s call process coordinator. Some other possibilities for sharing information include:

- sending a cover letter with the packet of materials you have put together that lifts up important highlights about the congregation,
- sharing stories and other information about the congregation during the visit of the candidate, either informally at a dinner or dessert time, or more formally during the interview.

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Questions to consider when shaping the first face-to-face candidate interview.

- What is the physical setting?
 - Formal or informal
 - Church, home, or office setting
 - Will you be around a table (more business-like) or in a circle of chairs or sofas (more intimate)
 - Does the general setting give the impression that we are welcoming and that we are doing something important? (For example, sitting on little plastic chairs in the two-year-old class would not give the right impression.)
- How will you offer hospitality?
 - Will there be refreshments at the beginning or during a break?
 - Will someone greet the candidate in the parking lot or bring them to the interview? (Sometimes the chair and/or another will take a candidate to supper and a tour of the neighborhood before the interview.)
- How will the interview be structured?
 - Who will be in charge of the flow of the meeting (making sure essential questions are asked, time is given for the candidate to ask questions, helping committee members be engaged, and finishing on time)?
 - How will the interview be opened?
 - Prayer? By whom?
 - Introductions?
 - Will there be nametags?
 - Will someone take notes during the meeting?
 - How will you make sure that essential questions are asked and that all committee members are engaged in the interview?
 - Some committees like to make sure ten to fifteen essential questions are asked of each candidate with other questions asked as seems appropriate.
 - Will committee members be assigned “their” questions or will the whole committee take responsibility for asking questions?
 - Do you want to structure the order of questions or have a “looser” flow with committee members asking questions when they seem to fit?

- How will you insure that the candidate has time to ask questions of committee members?
 - Do you want to prepare committee members to respond to questions from candidates in specific areas or leave it open to whomever desires to respond or feels qualified to answer. (It's a good idea for all to find some opportunity to speak sometime during the interview.)
 - You can probably anticipate some questions from candidates for which a considered (if not rehearsed) response would be helpful, especially in sensitive areas or over issues where committee members and/or congregation disagree. What are some potential questions from a candidate you would like to anticipate and prepare for?
 - Questions you pose to candidates are typically ways to learn about *competencies*. But you have also identified *characteristics* that you would like a pastor to have. What are you looking for that gives clues to personality, outlook, and relational style?
- How will the interview be concluded?
 - Will you close at a pre-determined time? (Most people become less productive after 90 minutes to two hours of concentrating on task.)
 - Who will close the meeting?
 - What will constitute the wrap-up with the candidate? (Usually thank-you's, a word about follow-up communication, and prayer (sometimes by the candidate)).
- How will assessment of the interview with candidate be made?
 - Will you share initial impressions immediately after the meeting or will you give time for impressions to “marinate” in prayer and reflection until another meeting, or both?
 - Will you have a prepared evaluation sheet that lists important competencies and characteristics with a numerical rating by each or will you assess largely by sharing impressions in conversation? (Of course, these are not mutually exclusive. But be careful that quantitative assessments don't substitute for prayerful conversation.)
 - A note: while it is inevitable to compare candidates with each other, it is more helpful to compare the candidate with the needs of the position, and, in particular, the important competencies and characteristics.
 - How will you decide whether to move forward with this candidate? Majority vote, unanimous vote, two-thirds majority, or by consensus decision-making?

THE ROLE OF LITURGIST/CHAPLAIN

Purpose:

- A liturgist/chaplain is given permission by the group to work alongside the committee chair, interjecting spiritual practices as deemed important and suitable to the group.
- A liturgist/chaplain may also be called upon by the committee chair, or a member of the group, to engage the group in a spiritual practice.
- The liturgist/chaplain endeavors to bring spiritually vital, relevant, engaging and enriching additions to the ordinary business of a meeting.

Role:

The liturgist/chaplain tends the *heart* of the meeting. He/she responds to the dynamics of the meeting by inviting the naming of God's presence at various times throughout the meeting. He/she may do this in a variety of ways, for example:

- inviting the naming of Scripture passages/stories that are related to the current conversation;
- inviting liturgical and theological responses to poignant moments (or other aspects of the meeting) and inviting group members to do the same;
- inviting spoken prayers: intercessions, thanksgivings, blessings, etc.;
- inviting silence and prayers that surface out of the silence;
- inviting the singing of hymns, i.e., a refrain, particular verses in response to reports, etc.;
- inviting prayerful or reflective activities during break times;
- creating and tending a simple environment, e.g., a candle, the Scriptures, a growing plant, a liturgical color;
- inviting the group to rejoice, lament, etc. using simple and prayerful rituals;
- connecting the opening and closing worship services (its themes, segments, rituals) with aspects of the meeting.

The liturgist/chaplain may or may not be involved in planning the agenda.

Adapted from:
The Liturgist/Spiritual Director for deliberative meetings. Beginning the conversation,
by Ellen Morseth, BVM.
©WORSHIPFUL-WORK: Center for Transforming Religious Leadership December 2, 1998
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TRAINING FEEDBACK

Please help us improve our call committee training by responding to the following.

1. What were the most helpful elements of the call committee training?
 2. What might be done differently next time to improve the content of the training?
 3. What did you appreciate most about the trainer's leadership?
 4. What might the trainer work on to improve her or his leadership?
 5. How would you rate the effect of this training on your competence as a call committee trainer? (check one)
 no effect somewhat more competent much more competent
 6. Make any more comments that would help us improve this training.

CLOSING PRAYERS

Training time: 15 minutes

Reading: Philippians 1:1-11

Prayers

*Each petition concludes “God of mercy”
with the response “Hold us in love.”*

Passing the Peace

Leader: The peace of the Lord be with you all.

All: And also with you.

The Peace is shared.

A chair is placed in the middle of the assembled participants. As each participant in turn sits in the chair, the following prayer is said by all.

O God, we pray for _____.

Open her/his ears to hear your voice among the many.

Open her/his eyes to see your face in the face of all people.

Open her/his mouth to proclaim the news of your love.

Open her/his hand to work for the coming of your reign through this congregation.

Amen.

Closing Prayer

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: Let us depart in peace.

All: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION GUIDE FOR GROUP DISCERNMENT

The discernment process includes collecting and interpreting data as well as corporate dialog with others who are discerning with you. The discernment process should also include private prayer and reflection. It's the "in the closet" portion of discernment. It comes naturally to some personality types, and can be a chore to others. But it is useful to all. So, for big decisions, try to schedule some time for private prayer and reflection.

These are suggestions for using some quiet and solitary time to reflect prayerfully on the choices you have before you regarding issuing a call to a new pastor. It will help if you find a place without distractions and where you can sit comfortably for a time.

You might begin using this portion of Psalm 119 to settle into a prayerful frame of mind. Say it softly a number of times with silence in between:

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

An important element to discerning God's will is *letting go* or *shedding*. There are many voices that clamor to be heard, some external and some internal. Not all of them are of God. Use these questions to separate or discern some of those voices.

1. As you imagine possible futures with these candidates, what feelings arise? What makes you angry, anxious, or excited?
 2. As you reflect on written material and conversation, what "hooks" your personal agendas and biases?
 3. What needs to die in you for God's desire to become alive in you?
 4. When you share your perspectives with the committee or council, do you need to make them aware of biases or passions that might affect your discernment of God's desire?
-

Here are some questions that have guided the church for centuries in its efforts to seek God's desire. They are intended to help test a tentative decision to see if it might be God's desire as well.

1. **Does it look like Jesus?** That is, does the tentative decision resonate with the witness of (or about) Jesus in scripture? Is it consistent with the tradition of the Church, or the advice of a wise mentor or trusted group of Christians? (Seeking

advice outside the council or call committee on this decision is not appropriate, but it may suggest that listening to persons in these groups is critical for discernment.)

2. **What is the feel of it?** Does the tentative decision have the “weight” of God’s will on it? (This comes from a time when suspicion arose about the genuineness of a gold coin if it was too light.) Does the tentative decision bring the peace of *rightness* OR the *disquiet* of the challenging change at the right time? Lay it next to your heart for some time. Does it bring *consolation* or *desolation*?
3. **What will be its fruits?** Imagine what will come with this decision. Play out possible futures. Make lists of “pro’s” and “con’s”. (Spiritual discernment does not exclude rational analysis!) If making comparisons, it may be best to compare candidates with the needs of the parish, not to compare candidates with each other. Do you see the fruits of the Spirit resulting from it? *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.* Galatians 5:22-23

Even if you have a clear choice when you complete your personal deliberation and reflection, take seriously the need to continue to listen to God through the voices of others on the call committee or council as you meet together. Keep an open heart and mind.

You might conclude your private time with a prayer for the corporate gathering to come. This prayer is from the Benedictine Sisters of Colorado Springs:

Loving God, we come to you seeking your preference in our lives.

*Fill us with your spirit of quiet listening, faith-filled freedom,
and generous response.*

*Touch our minds and hearts so that we may have eyes to see
and ears to hear what you ask of us in our ministry.*

Heal us that we may heal each other through your compassionate love and mercy.

This we ask in the name of your son, Jesus the Christ, and his Holy Spirit.

Amen.

REFLECTION GUIDE FOR GROUP DISCERNMENT

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and generous response.*

*Touch our minds and hearts so that we may have eyes to see
and ears to hear what you ask of us in our ministry.*

Heal us that we may heal each other through your compassionate love and mercy.

This we ask in the name of your son, Jesus the Christ, and his Holy Spirit.

Amen.

WORKING WITH ROSTERED LEADER PROFILES

THE ROSTERED LEADER PROFILE (RLP):

The RLP is a document that is common across the ELCA. The RLP is completed by the candidate and provides a candidate's assessment of him/herself.

SCREENING AND PROCESSING OF RLP'S AT THE SYNODELICAL LEVEL:

expressing an interest in NC end up being placed in this pool Prior to providing the names of candidates and a copy of their RLP to a call committee the following steps are taken at the synodical level of the call process:

1. Candidates' RLP's come from a variety of sources:
 - a. Candidates from other synods interested in moving to NC. These RLP's have been cleared by the bishop of their synod.
 - b. Candidates from NC Synod who have indicated a willingness to be open to a new call.
 - c. Potential candidates recommended by congregational members. The call committee chair shares appropriate names with the synod and they are cleared through bishop's office of appropriate synod. Those cleared, are contacted to determine willingness to consider a call at this time.
 - d. Candidates who request to have their RLP considered by a particular congregation.
 - e. Seminarians assigned to NC Synod.
 - f. Bishop's staff sometimes asks a particular pastor to consider submitting a RLP because they feel that pastor has gifts that match a particular congregation.
2. RLP's are screened through a detailed review and interview process. Candidates are interviewed by a bishop's staff person to get a better understanding of the candidate's strengths, the preferred size and setting of a congregation and to determine other key factors that will help match them to particular congregations. Only those candidates who have the appropriate skills, experience and desirable qualities are placed in a pool of available candidates. Only about 25% of RLP's.
3. Wednesday mornings the bishop's staff, through prayer and conversation, makes decisions to assist congregations and candidates in the call process. It is in this process that candidates' names are paired with congregations. The names are shared with the call committee chair person and an RLP for the individual is sent to the call committee. The candidate is informed that his/her name has been shared with the specific congregation and a copy of the congregational study and Ministry Site Profile is sent to him/her. Receiving an RLP from synod is a guarantee that they have come through proper channels.

HOW CALL COMMITTEES ARE ASKED TO CONTINUE THE PROCESS

1. Because candidates and RLP's have been pre-screened and prayerfully matched with congregations through the above process it is anticipated that call committees will make personal contact with each candidate. Therefore the function of the RLP the committee receives is not pre-screening. The RLP is sent to help the call committee develop conversation and appropriate questions for a personal contact and interview(s) with the candidate. Use the RLP as a

springboard for conversation. Never dismiss a candidate on the basis of the RLP alone. Always feel free to contact the bishop's staff person with questions and/or concerns prior to contacting a candidate. He/she will gladly share reasons why the name was thought to be a match for the congregation.

2. Remember the RLP is completed by the candidate. The "essay" answers give you a great wealth of information on leadership style, worship preferences, theological stances, and ministry priorities. Pay attention to these to help design questions and conversation. The prioritization sections are somewhat helpful but are no reason to eliminate a candidate without having conversation. Feel free to ask why or why not an item was ranked as a priority.
3. One person from the call committee can have initial conversation with the candidate and set up a time for an interview. Face to face interviews are by far the best. If a candidate has to travel a long distance (over a 5 hour drive) an initial phone interview or SKYPE/video conferencing might be held. The candidate is aware you have the RLP, so having copies of the RLP present at the interview is perfectly acceptable.
4. You are reminded that this is not a secretive process but it is a confidential one. Therefore be sure that RLP is kept only in the hands and eyes of the call committee. If you duplicate the RLP for the committee, make sure the duplication process is done by a committee member.
5. The RLP contains references. Check references usually after a first interview if you think the conversation will go further. Background checks are encouraged and may be required by your insurance carrier. The synod does not do background checks. We have checked for any known problems with appropriate synod offices for out of NC people.

This handout is identical to the document in book two of the Call Process Guide

PHONE INTERVIEWS WITH CANDIDATES FOR CALL

Phone interviews are often the beginning of significant personal contact with a candidate for call. While face-to-face interviews will provide the greatest opportunity to discern personal characteristics of the candidate, call committees will begin to "get a feel" for whom this candidate is through conversation on the phone.

Phone interviews will not be an element of all call processes. When candidates are close by, face-to-face interviews are preferable. When phone interviews are used, they are not a replacement for face-to-face conversation with candidates. They can, however, be a useful preliminary step.

Purpose

In general, the purpose of the phone interview is to gather--at an early stage of contact--information and impressions that help a call committee begin to determine whether a candidate is a potential match for the needed competencies and characteristics of the congregation, and thus worth moving the process to a face-to-face interview. Specifically, during phone interviews a committee can:

- assist a candidate in determining where God's call might be by answering questions about the congregation with clarity and honesty,
- seek clarification about items in the candidate's "availability for call" form,
- be prepared to answer questions from candidates to help clarify information provided thus far,
- begin to determine the competencies and characteristics of the candidate.

Preparation

Candidate arrangements: Share the agenda, the general topics of conversation, and the expected time commitment with the candidate before the phone interview. Some congregations have sent ahead of time a list—even a photo—of those who will be participating.

Reading: Do your homework; know the candidate's resume, the congregation's profile, and the plan for the interview

Setting: Secure a room that is private and is equipped with a good speakerphone. Ensure that everyone who will be present can hear the speaker well.

Participants: generally a facilitator and two questioners can conduct the interview. Too many speaking participants will confuse the candidate.

Practice: Find someone on the committee to act as a candidate and practice the phone interview with him or her, testing the technology and the interview process.

Time: Design an interview that lasts from 45 minutes to an hour. (Remember that substantive questions can easily take ten minutes each.) Phone interviews can be especially tiring. Don't extend them past the time when personal resources run out. Body language is missing from a phone interview so participants should strive for clarity of meaning.

An Outline for an Interview

1. Thank candidate for taking time for this interview.
2. Introduce those who are present, including the roles assigned. (Participants can introduce themselves.)
3. Share the agenda and ask for agreement on or questions about agenda from candidate.
4. Ask questions of candidate.
5. Invite questions from candidate.
6. Thank candidate for his or her time and energy (and anything else that you can genuinely thank him or her for.)
7. Tell the candidate when he or she may expect further contact from the committee.
8. End the conversation with prayer or the promise of prayerfulness.

What Should We Ask?

Questions for phone or face-to-face interviews should be developed out of the expressed needs of the congregation and from the competencies and characteristics of a pastor that have been developed by the call committee and are mostly likely to meet the needs of the congregation. Questions for the phone interview can also arise from the more pragmatic needs of managing the call process. They will be different in each context. The examples listed are meant to be suggestive, not restrictive.

However, try to make the core questions consistent for every candidate interviewed. At the same time, follow-up questions and conversation can often take their own path with each candidate. This is typically a sign of good process rather than sloppy interviewing.

Ask general questions at the beginning, for example:

"Tell us something about your current setting."

"Tell us about your family."

"Could you say something about the reason you are open to a new call at this time?"

Ask questions that solicit evidence of competencies, for example:

"Tell us about a time when a group for which you had responsibility seemed stuck and unable to move forward with its task. How did you respond and what was the outcome?"

"Our members have high expectations of preaching. Tell us about your preparations for preaching and what people tell you most about your sermons."

Ask process questions, for example:

"Do you have any questions for us about the material you have received from us?"

"What questions do you have about our search process?"

"Is there anything else you think we need to attend to while we've got you on the phone?"

AVOID questions (during the phone interview) that are:

too personal, for example, "I understand you are divorced. Please tell me how that experience affected your spiritual life."

overly complex, for example, "Tell us about your style of managing conflict in a parish setting by giving an example of when two or more factions were acting destructively. How did you respond? What outside resources did you use? And what did you learn about yourself?" (Not bad questions, but probably too much for a phone interview.)

deal with "hot button" topics, for example, "What is your opinion about practicing homosexuals becoming ordained?"

These questions generally are best attended to within a context of some mutual trust. Such an atmosphere is more difficult to establish on the phone.

Follow-up

- Immediately after the phone interview, all participants, even those with no assigned role, may share impressions of the interview, from relevant facts to gut feelings. While questions are generally asked to elicit responses that indicate competencies (skills, aptitudes, experience), committee participants will have also listened for evidences of characteristics (personality, outlook on life, relational style.) In addition, participants in the phone interview should be careful about forming strong or "preemptive" conclusions from a phone interview, particularly about personality and other characteristics, since clues that are available in face-to-face interviews are not present in this context. The "bottom line" question is "Have we heard anything that would convince us that this candidate is not a good match?"
- Write a letter within one week that thanks the candidate for their time and shares the candidate's status in the process. Sharing gentle feedback from the interview can help a candidate learn. Copying the bishop's staff person with whom you are working can also help the bishop's staff learn more about both candidate and congregation.