

The Transition Process

2022



Allegheny Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”—Philippians 4:6-8

Transition Process Summary

Allegheny Synod, ELCA

When a pastoral change occurs in a congregation, there can be a variety of emotions. This period of ‘interim’ or time-between regularly called pastors can be difficult as the congregation grieves the loss of the previous pastor and enters into a time of transition. However, the interim period also may be a very positive and productive period in the life of the congregation. It can be a time to re-examine its mission and focus and a time to discern how the Holy Spirit is calling the congregation to the future.

The staff of the Office of Bishop of the Allegheny Synod will assist your congregation during this period of transition. You will have a contact person for questions and concerns.

The following process reflects a positive decision toward the calling of a pastor. At any point in the steps that follow, the candidate or the congregation’s call committee may choose not to continue the process. If the candidate makes the determination not to continue in the process, he/she will notify the contact person from the Office of the Bishop. If the congregation determines not to continue, the call committee chairperson will notify the contact person from the Office of the Bishop. In either case, with further discernment, the Bishop or the contact person will present another candidate to the call committee and the process will begin again.

To begin:

1. A Call Committee is named. (*see* Suggestions for Selection of a Call Committee)
Consult your congregation’s constitution regarding whether or not a call committee is appointed or elected. If the constitution states a call committee is *appointed*, the Congregation Council will review names and appoint members. If the constitution states that a call committee is *elected*, the Congregation Council will present a slate of names to be elected by the congregation at a specially called congregational meeting following the guidelines for such a meeting in the constitution.
2. The Call Committee completes the Ministry Site Profile (MSP)
(*see* Guide for Completing and Accessing MSP).
3. The MSP is submitted to the ELCA database and activated by the call process administrator in the Office of the Bishop.

After the MSP is submitted:

1. The Bishop, or a representative of the Bishop, reviews the MSP with the council and call committee either in person or via phone.
2. The Bishop, or a representative of the Bishop, activates the MSP on the ELCA database.
3. The Office of the Bishop reviews names of potential candidates through the ELCA database system, interviews potential candidates, and discerns gifts for open congregations.
4. The Bishop, or a representative of the Bishop, presents a candidate to the call committee through a Rostered Minister Profile prepared by the candidate.
5. The call committee discerns whether to interview the candidate and is in contact with the Office of the Bishop regarding the decision.

6. Following a first interview, the call committee and candidate enter a period of discernment about whether to continue the process. If both parties wish to continue in the process, the Office of the Bishop schedules a site for the candidate to lead worship for the call committee.
7. After the candidate has led worship and both the call committee and candidate wish to continue in the process, the call committee may schedule another interview either in-person or via electronic means OR the call committee may recommend the candidate to the council
8. The Congregation Council interviews the candidate and is prepared to present compensation recommendation.
9. If both the Congregation Council and the candidate wish to continue the process, the Congregation Council recommends the candidate to the congregation.
10. A congregational meeting is set according to the guidelines in the congregation's constitution for the purpose of calling the pastor.
11. Arrangements are made for the congregational vote.
12. On the weekend of the congregational meeting, the call committee and council should arrange for a reception for the candidate and invite members of the congregation to attend and meet the candidate and his/her family before the meeting.
13. The candidate will lead worship on the day of the congregational meeting. A representative of the Office of the Bishop will preside over the congregation vote. The Congregation Council president will preside over the congregational meeting.
14. The candidate accepts the call.
15. The Bishop attests to the Letter of Call and the compensation package.
16. Mutual expectations are adopted and the candidate is in contact with the Bishop to schedule the Installation service.

Suggestions for selection of a Call Committee

Allegheny Synod, ELCA

Please consult your congregation's constitution regarding the requirements for establishing a call committee (*i.e. appointed vs. elected*) and the number of members on the committee (*the Office of the Bishop suggests 5-7 members and no more than 10 in a parish situation*).

When selecting a Call Committee, it is helpful to:

- have a Council liaison to the Call Committee; however, consider involving individuals other than Council members to complete the committee
- choose individuals who are representative of the congregation - young, old, female, male, ethnically & culturally diverse
- resist asking only new members to be a part of the committee
- consider individuals who represent various committees and/or ministries of the congregation
- identify individuals who are open-minded and able to work in a team
- include individuals who can keep a confidence
- consider the gifts necessary to complete the task and include individuals who in their daily lives have skills in areas such as: *interviewing, computer, organization, writing, listening, leadership, etc.*
- include members who are willing to commit time to the process, which includes: attending meetings, developing the Ministry Site Profile, involving themselves in the interview process, etc.
- consider individuals who are able to reassure and communicate with members of the congregation
- involve members who are prayerfully committed to the task

When selecting a Call Committee Chairperson, consider someone who is:

- respected and trusted by the congregation
- experienced and skilled at leading
- able to manage meetings to enable all members of the committee to contribute
- a skilled communicator who is able to reassure a sometimes anxious congregation, formally at worship and informally through church activities
- prayerfully committed to the task

After the call committee is selected the Order of Prayer for and Affirmation of a Call Committee may be used during congregational worship. (see p. 23)

The Ministry Site Profile may be accessed at <http://www.elca.org/Call-Process/Ministry-Sites>

Discernment of Call

The following process reflects a positive decision toward the calling of a pastor. However, at any point in the steps that follow, *either the candidate or the congregation* may choose not to continue the process.

If the candidate makes the determination not to continue in the process, he/she will notify the contact person from the Office of the Bishop. If the congregation determines not to continue, the Call Committee chairperson will notify the contact person from the Office of the Bishop. In either case, with further discernment, the Bishop will present another candidate to the Call Committee and the process will begin again.

After the Ministry Site Profile (MSP) is completed,

The Bishop or the Bishop's representative meets with the Call Committee

The Bishop or the Bishop's representative will meet with the Call Committee and/or the Congregation Council either in person or via phone to review the information in the Ministry Site Profile. The purpose of this meeting is to clarify the information for a further understanding of the type of pastor the congregation is hoping to call.

The Bishop or the Bishop's representative activates the MSP on the data base

After the MSP is reviewed, it is activated on the ELCA database. Potential candidates can access the congregation's demographic information as well as the 75 word summary of the congregation's ministry setting found on page 8 of the Ministry Site Profile

The Bishop or the Bishop's representative reviews potential candidates, primarily through ELCA database system, and interviews potential candidates and discerns gifts for open congregations

The Bishop and the Bishop's representative will begin searching for a candidate. Potential names primarily come through the ELCA database of Rostered Minister Profiles (RMP), which the Bishop can access and review. Names also can be submitted by members of the searching congregations sent through the Call Committee chairperson. The Bishop and the Bishop's representative will interview candidates and determine if the potential candidate has gifts and talents that match the needs of the searching congregations. The Office of the Bishop prays for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the discernment of candidates for congregations.

The Bishop or a representative of the Bishop, presents a Candidate to the Call Committee

The Bishop or a representative of the Bishop presents the name of a pastoral candidate, together with the candidate's Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) to the Call Committee chairperson. The Call Committee meets to review the information and decide if they desire to continue the process.

The Candidate visits with the Call Committee

After the Call Committee reflects a desire to interview the candidate, the Call Committee chair should contact the candidate and arrange the visit and interview. If the candidate is located quite a distance away, an electronic interview via Skype or Zoom can be arranged. If a congregation does not have the capability for an electronic interview, one can be arranged at the Allegheny Synod Office through the call process administrator.

Some things to consider **before** the first interview:

Date and Time: What works best for the candidate (and family) and the Call Committee?

Will a meal be shared with the candidate (and family) and the Call Committee? If so, where? When? Who will make the arrangements?

Does the candidate or any family member have dietary restrictions?

Location:

Will the interview take place at the church? Be sure to check the congregation calendar for any conflicts.

If a meal is being shared, is there meeting space available at the restaurant?

Have you provided adequate directions to the church and/or meeting space?

If you are having an electronic interview, have you checked the connection to be sure it works? Have you provided your username to the candidate?

Family:

Will the candidate's family accompany him/her? If so, have appropriate accommodations been made?

Will the spouse of the candidate share the interview, only stay for introductions, or not at all?

If the spouse will not be in the interview, have arrangements been made to host him/her during the interview?

If the candidate's family (including children) are accompanying the candidate, have arrangements been made to host the children?

General:

Is lodging required? If so, have appropriate arrangements been made?

Who will meet the candidate (and family) when they arrive?

Are there special touches arranged for the candidate? (a packet of information about the area, directions to the meeting place, contact information for questions before the interview, etc.)

Will transportation be required for the candidate? If so, who is doing that? Has the candidate been given that person's contact information?

Will the call committee be providing a tour of the area? If so, when?

If there is a parsonage, plans should be made to show the house to the candidate (and family).

Have plans been made to reimburse the candidate for travel expenses?

Preparing for the Interview

Has each member of the Call Committee reviewed the candidate's Rostered Minister Profile?

Has the Call Committee met to formulate and discuss questions for the interview? An interview guide is located on p. 14

Has the candidate's name been kept in confidence?

The Initial Interview

The Call Committee Chair arranges this meeting in consultation with the candidate.

Who will open the meeting with prayer asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

Does the Call Committee wish to have the candidate lead them in a Bible study at the interview? If so, has the Chair confirmed that with the candidate?

Often, the interview takes place in the church building. If it is not taking place in the church building, have arrangements been made for a quiet, confidential space?

The Call Committee should be prepared to ask AND answer questions as they explore areas of ministry with the candidate.

Part of the conversation should include congregational-pastoral expectations. Suggestions can be found on p. 23-30

If you've shared a meal, make arrangements for coffee/water to be available during the interview. If there has not been a meal, consider providing refreshments as part of the initial interview.

At the conclusion of the interview, the candidate (and family) departs and the Call Committee should establish a time when they will meet to discuss the interview and make a decision about continuing the process. This meeting should take place within a week of the interview.

Both the candidate and the Chair of the Call Committee have the responsibility of being in contact with the contact person in the Office of the Bishop regarding the decision about moving forward with the call process.

Following the initial interview

If both the candidate and the call committee wish to continue the call process, the contact person in the Office of the Bishop will make arrangements for the candidate to return/travel to lead worship in a local congregation—not the interviewing congregation.

The candidate's name still should be kept in confidence. The Call Committee Chair may communicate to the congregation that an interview was held and the process is moving forward asking for members to pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Only the call committee members should attend the worship service when the candidate is leading worship.

The Call Committee may arrange to host the candidate (and family) for lunch following worship if time permits. This could be an informal time to continue conversation from the initial interview.

After the candidate (and family) departs, the Call Committee should arrange a time to meet and discuss whether or not to continue the process/recommend the candidate to the Congregation Council. Generally, a unanimous vote of the Call Committee is recommended in order to recommend the candidate to the Congregation Council. If the vote is not unanimous, the Call Committee should be in conversation with the contact person in the Office of the Bishop. If needed, the contact person may meet with the Call Committee.

If the Call Committee decides to recommend the candidate to the Congregation Council, the Chair should be in contact with the candidate, the contact person in the Office of the Bishop, and the Congregation Council president in order to schedule an interview.

Congregation Council Interview

When the candidate is recommended to the Congregation Council, the Call Committee Chair should share the candidate's Rostered Minister Profile with the president who will distribute it to the entire Council. *NOTE: The candidate's name should remain confidential through this process.*

The same considerations for the Council interview as for the Initial Interview should be reviewed and discussed by the Congregation Council (see p. 7-8).

Has each member of the Council reviewed the candidate's Rostered Minister Profile?

Has the Council met and formulated questions for the interview? (A guide is found on p. 14).

Has the compensation package, moving expenses, benefits, continuing education, and vacation been discussed and prepared for the interview? The Allegheny Synod Compensation and Benefits Manual is available on the website to assist in this process.

Generally, this interview is conducted in the church building.

After the interview, the Congregation Council should meet to decide if they wish to recommend the candidate to the congregation for call. This decision should be made within a week of the interview.

Generally, a unanimous vote of the Council is needed to recommend the candidate to the congregation for call. If there is not a unanimous vote, the Council President should be in contact with the contact person in the Office of the Bishop.

If the Congregation Council decides to recommend the candidate to the congregation, a special congregational meeting should be scheduled according to the congregation's constitutional guidelines.

Congregational Meeting

In a parish setting (multiple congregations), each Council calls a special meeting.

The congregation is notified of the special meeting. The purpose of the meeting is stated in writing according to the congregation's constitution.

The Congregation Council should review the constitution guidelines for calling a pastor. The quorum should be established prior to the meeting being called to order.

The Congregation Council should review how their constitution establishes voting members.

The ELCA Model Constitution reads: *"Notice of all meetings of (the) congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays and by mail to all members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting."*

The mailing sent to the congregation includes: a biographical sketch of the candidate, the proposed compensation and benefit package, the proposed starting date (if known), information about a reception for the candidate, generally on the Saturday before the vote.

The candidate can provide hymn selections, sermon title, etc., to the congregation's secretary prior to the congregational meeting. If the candidate is not yet ordained, the Office of the Bishop will assist in providing a celebrant for communion.

A motion is prepared stating the Congregation Council recommends the candidate to the congregation for the purpose of extending the call as pastor. The Congregation president presents the motion at the meeting.

Members should be appointed prior to the congregational meeting to help distribute and collect ballots and to verify the count. Members can be council members and/or call committee members. Four to six people is recommended. A two thirds majority is required to call a pastor. PLEASE NOTE: The candidate has thirty days to discern the call after it is extended.

A letter of call is prepared by the Office of the Bishop and sent following the congregational meeting.

The Congregation Council president should maintain contact with the candidate regarding date of start, moving, and other questions that arise in the process of the transition.

The Congregation Council secretary should take minutes of the congregational meeting and provide the final vote count.

A representative of the Office of the Bishop will preside over the vote and provide ballots.

A reception may be held following the congregational meeting for the candidate and their family.

Going Forward

Start Date	<p>When the pastor-elect accepts the call, the starting date will be negotiated with the Congregation Council. Generally, a pastor serving a call when called to another congregation is asked to give four weeks' notice. If there is unused vacation time with the former congregation, the pastor-elect may use that before beginning the new call.</p> <p>If a parsonage is available, the pastor-elect should negotiate a move-in date with the Congregation Council. Moving expenses are the responsibility of the calling congregation.</p>
Residence	<p>If the congregation provides a parsonage, the congregation will prepare the house for occupancy (<i>i.e., cleaning, necessary repairs, etc.</i>) before the pastor moves. Preparations and arrangements, painting and major repairs for the parsonage shall involve the pastor, the pastor's family, and the congregation. The congregation is responsible for all upkeep of the parsonage and its property (lawn care, snow removal, minor and major repairs, etc.).</p> <p>If the congregation provides a housing allowance instead of a parsonage, the congregation can assist the pastor and family in securing a residence.</p>
Getting Acquainted with the Community and Publicity	<p>The congregation will assist the pastor and family in becoming acquainted with the community. They should provide maps, general community information concerning schools and medical services, cultural events, and shopping locations. Introductions and shared visits with the mayor, police chief, fire company captain, community organizations, etc., are in order. It is appropriate to introduce the new minister to the community through newspaper, websites, etc.</p>
Vacancy Pastor	<p>The congregation shall complete all obligations to the vacancy pastor before the new pastor arrives. The vacancy pastor will make certain that the parish register is in order before the new pastor arrives and the Dean of the Conference will certify that fact. In certain circumstances, the congregation may provide a farewell event for the departing vacancy pastor</p>
Moving Day	<p>The congregation is responsible for paying the moving costs of the new minister (<i>& family</i>.) If agreed upon by the pastor, the congregation can assist with moving and the special needs of the pastor (<i>& family</i>) on moving day (<i>i.e. baby-sitting, meals, temporary overnight accommodations, etc.</i>).</p>
Mutual Ministry Committee	<p>The new pastor and the congregational council will appoint a Mutual Ministry Committee. Members of the Call Committee may be named to serve on this committee. The pastor has the prerogative to name the members of the Mutual Ministry committee. It may take several months for this committee to become active as the pastor begins to know the congregation and community.</p>

The responsibilities of the Mutual Ministry can be clarified by referring to the book *Pastor and People: Making Mutual Ministry Work* (available through Augsburg-Fortress).

During the early weeks of the pastor's ministry, the committee should be alert to the particular personal concerns of the pastor and the pastor's family. Of special concern are such matters as: stress that is normal in moving to a new community, different styles and habits of the new pastor, and personal and faith issues and needs of the new congregation.

**Membership of Pastor
(and family)**

At the installation service, the pastor and family shall be received as members of the congregation. In the case of a parish situation (multiple congregations), the pastor may be a member of all congregations or one—it is the pastor's choice.

Installation

The Bishop shall authorize a service of installation for the new pastor and the Bishop shall normally be the officiating minister. The new pastor and Bishop will be in contact to plan the service.

The congregation may extend an invitation to pastors and congregations of the conference and to clergy and members of other local congregations, to attend the service. The worship will be a service of Word and Sacrament according to the provisions of the Evangelical Lutheran Worship's companion *Occasional Services Book*.

The congregation is encouraged to sponsor a reception or other welcoming event for the new pastor as a part of the installation day activities

**Six-month Review
of Expectations**

Typically, this review will take place six months after the pastor has begun his/her ministry with the congregation. The Congregation Council may review the expectations that were developed in the call process with the pastor. If the congregation has a personnel committee, they shall conduct the review. If requested, the Bishop or a representative of the Bishop may be present for the review.

**Complete the Call Process
Assessment Tool**

The Call Committee and Council can provide feedback about the Call Process to the Office of the Bishop through the Assessment Tool found on p. 20. Distribute copies of this form to members of the Call Committee and ask them to complete the assessment. After the forms are completed, individuals may want to share and discuss each person's comments. Then, send them to the Allegheny Synod Office (701 Quail Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602-3010, or e-mail to office@alleghenysynod.com)

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Interview Guide

As the Call Committee prepares for the interview, the leadership needs identified in the Ministry Site Profile can guide your conversation. The Call Committee can use this form as a guide for their interview. The Call Committee should realize that a give-and-take conversation would not necessarily allow you to ask the questions in predictable order. An effective interview is a two-way street with the candidate bringing questions and concerns. Allow time and opportunity for the candidate to ask questions and be prepared to address them.

This list of possible questions is not comprehensive. It is merely suggestive of issues you might want to raise with the candidate in areas connected to ministry and parish life:

YOUR CALL TO MINISTRY

Tell us about yourself.

Briefly, describe the events that led you to prepare for the ministry.

Describe the process of deliberation that helps you determine God's call.

In what ways has your call to ministry changed over the years?

Tell us why you are seeking a new call.

WORSHIP/PREACHING

Describe your process of preparing for the worship service on Sunday morning.

Think back in your ministry and tell us about the most difficult sermon you ever preached.

Share some of your thoughts about the worship life of a congregation.

SOCIAL MINISTRY/OUTREACH

Tell us how you evaluate community needs and community strengths.

Describe how you have contributed to the quality of life in your community.

Describe how you go about motivating members of your congregation to respond to community needs.

ADMINISTRATOR/LEADER

Describe the steps you normally take when working with groups to achieve consensus or cohesiveness.

How would you describe your style of leadership in overseeing the work of the congregation?

Tell us about a period in your life when you had to manage multiple demands in your work and how you determined priorities.

Describe your ministry schedule, including office hours, days off, vacation, & continuing education.

TEACHING THE FAITH

How do you evaluate the faith development of others?

Describe your approach for helping adults to grow in their faith.

Describe your approach for teaching children and young people about the Christian faith.

STEWARDSHIP

Describe how you have helped others grow in their personal stewardship.

In what ways have you helped members understand the management of their responsibilities as Christian stewards?

Describe the development of your personal sense of Christian stewardship.

EVANGELISM

Describe ways in which you typically become acquainted and associate with unchurched people in your community.

What kind of guidance and training do you provide members of your congregation for reaching unchurched persons in the community?

Describe how you have achieved a multicultural approach to your ministry.

INTERPERSONAL CLIMATE

What steps do you take in helping others feel secure, trusted, and open with you?

Pressure often mounts in the ministry and congregational life. What do you do to manage the situation and maintain your cool in ministry?

Describe an experience where conflict arose between you and another person and how resolution finally was achieved.

MINISTRY IN CRISIS/COUNSELING

Describe your style of ministry to person in crisis.

Describe how you have used the establishment of boundaries to strengthen your ministry.

How do you assess your own professional limitations when ministering to persons in crisis?

INTERPRETER OF THEOLOGY

Describe ways in which you communicate the faith.

Describe your skills as teacher and preacher.

What resources do you use to remain theologically and biblically fresh and current?

INNOVATOR

Describe your approach to introducing new ideas to the congregation.

Describe your current vision for ministry and how you would help others in the congregation to capture that vision.

Think back on your ministry, describe a situation that was stagnant or failing, and describe how you stepped in to revitalize it.

DENOMINATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Describe how you have guided your congregation's members into understanding their relationship to the greater church.

Describe your participation in the work of the church beyond the congregation, including ecumenical relationships, church agencies, and institutions.

Describe what a congregation's role in relationship to the Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

PERSONAL GROWTH

Describe some of your most important accomplishments and how you reached those goals.

How do you work at making yourself more effective in your work?

Briefly, describe ways in which you care for yourself physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

Questions the candidate may ask the Call Committee

Describe the mission and vision of this congregation?

Identify ministry ideas that the congregation might have but do not presently have.

What do you think individuals like about this congregation?

How would a newcomer describe this congregation?

Explain the role of staff and the role of the laity in this congregation.

Describe the involvement of members in: leadership roles; committees; worship; youth; etc.

Describe decisions made in your congregation?

How do you welcome and assimilate new members?

What is the congregation's commitment to support of and partnership with the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America?

What would you display on a highway billboard regarding this congregation?

Why did the previous pastor leave?

Are there issues from the past that I should know about in considering the call here?

In what area(s) of social concern has the congregation been active?

What are some of the reasons that you are members of this congregation and not some other one?

What expectations does the congregation have of a pastor?

Describe the congregation's view of continuing education, including how expenses have been paid in the past, how decisions about continuing education opportunities are made, etc.

Many people have expectations of a pastor's family. Describe those that exist in this congregation.

Administratively, how are Council, committee, and congregational meeting's agendas made?
What is the pastor's role?

What are the housing opportunities in the neighborhood?

What present financial arrangements have been made for the pastor's housing? Has the Council and/or congregation envisioned any future ideas for the pastor's housing (*shared equity, mortgage loan from the congregation, etc.*)?

Describe the school system in this area.

If I were called here, describe the congregation's role in moving.

Minimum Compensation Guidelines

The 2022 Allegheny Synod Compensation and Benefits guide can be found [here](#).

The guide offers worksheets and information to consider as you prepare a compensation and benefit package for the person called to be your next pastor. Synod staff are available to help answer questions if needed.

Congregational Call Vote

BEFORE the congregation meeting, the Council's responsibilities are:

- Notify the congregation of the special meeting and state its purpose in writing and at worship, according to the congregation's Constitution.
The ELCA Model Constitution reads: "Notice of all meetings of (the) congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays and by mail to all members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting."
- Include in that mailing:
 - a biographical sketch of the Candidate;
 - the proposed compensation and benefit package;
 - the proposed starting date, and
 - information about a reception for the Candidate, usually held on the Saturday before the vote.
- Prepare a motion stating that you are presenting a pastoral candidate to the congregation.
- Prepare the *Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor* forms. (Available from the Office of the Bishop)
 - ✓ *We suggest making a working copy before completing the originals.*
 - ✓ *Please do not sign until after the vote is confirmed.*
 - ✓ *Send completed and signed copies to Bishop for signing.*
- Keep in contact with the Candidate.
- Ask the Candidate to provide worship information i.e. hymns, sermon title, etc.
- See that the Council secretary is prepared to record the results of the vote in the regular minutes of the congregation.
- Appoint tellers to distribute, collect, and count the ballots.
 - ✓ *We recommend four to six persons.*
- Consult the congregation's Constitution regarding the requirements for a quorum and criteria for voting membership.

DURING the congregation meeting,

1. The congregational president should:
 - Call the meeting to order.
 - Confirm that a quorum is present.
 - Announce who may and may not vote per your congregation's Constitution.
 - Present the recommendation of the Council to the congregation as a motion and obtain a second.
 - Allow the opportunity for the congregation to be in final dialogue with the Candidate.
 - Have one of the members of the Call Committee escort the Candidate (*and, if present, family*) to another room until the results of the vote are known.
 - Announce that two-thirds of the total votes cast are needed for election of a minister.
 - Turn the balloting responsibility over to the representative of the Office of the Bishop.

2. The Synodical Representative will bring the ballots and will:
- Explain the election process and use of the ballots.
 - Pray with the congregation before the vote.
 - Have the tellers distribute the ballots.
 - When everyone has voted, have the tellers collect the ballots.
 - Oversee the balloting process including the counting by the tellers after the final vote.
 - ✓ *Again, two-thirds of the total votes cast constitute the election of a minister.*
 - Notify the Office of the Bishop and return the ballots to the Synod Office.
3. The Council president's responsibilities following the total vote count are to:
- Inform the candidate of the balloting results.
 - ✓ *Allow time for the candidate to tell you how they will respond, remembering that the pastor-elect has 30 days to respond to the call.*
 - Announce the results of the vote to the congregation after the final vote.
 - Please provide the number of ballots, the number of affirmative votes and negative votes, and the percentage of votes.*
 - If the requirements for election have been satisfied, present the minister as the congregation's minister-elect.
 - Invite the minister to respond.
 - If appropriate, comment on the next steps of securing the call.
 - ✓ *If known, report the starting date, housing arrangements, anticipation of moving day, answer questions as you are able, etc.*
 - Adjourn the meeting.

When the call is accepted, the Council president should:

- Sign the **Letter of Call** with the Council secretary when it is received from the Office of the Bishop.
- Sign the "DEFINITION OF COMPENSATION, BENEFITS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PASTOR" with the minister and Council secretary.
- Return the "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor" forms to the Synod Office for the Bishop's signature.
- Work with the candidate to transition into the community of faith.
- With the Council, mutual ministry committee, and minister, continued discussion of expectations should happen.

Contact the Office of the Bishop at any time with questions or concerns, 814-942-1042, office@alleghenysynod.com

Call Process Assessment Tool

The Office of the Bishop is your partner during a pastoral transition. In order to improve and build on our relationship with congregations, we ask that you provide feedback on the call process.

Please **distribute** copies of this form to members of the Call Committee and Council. Ask them to **complete** the assessment. After the forms are completed, individuals may want to share and discuss each person's comments.

Send the completed assessments to the Synod Office (701 Quail Ave., Altoona, PA 16602, or office@allegHENYSYNOD.COM). Any questions, please call at 814-942-1042.

Every form is read and used in re-assessing the Call Process in the Allegheny Synod.

Thank you in advance for your feedback.

Please assess the following: *(If your rating is below average or you would like to add additional comments, please do so on the back or a separate paper.)*

Please circle the words that describe your overall personal experience with the call process

Spiritual	Frustrating	Insightful	Unclear
Prayerful	Enlightening	Confusing	Rewarding
Meaningful	Clear	Helpful	Unorganized

Please rate your overall personal experience with the participation of the Office of the Bishop

3 - Very Helpful 2- Helpful 1- Less than helpful

Please rate your overall personal experience with the call process

3 - Very Helpful 2- Helpful 1- Less than helpful

What did you learn about yourself or the Call Process that surprised you?

What did you find least helpful about the process?

What suggestions do you have to enrich the Call Process of the Allegheny Synod?

Congregation:

Name: (optional):

Phone or E-mail: (optional):

Prayers for Congregations in Transitions

Between the time when a minister has left the congregation and a new leader is called, many concerns will surface and questions arise. *What are the congregation's strengths and weaknesses? How will these be affected by the vacancy? How will we accomplish our goals without a pastor? What gifts do we have within our congregation to make this transition easier? How will we find a new leader?*

Yet, in spite of these and other uncertainties, we are reminded that God is still with us. God encourages us and asks us to prayerfully place our needs, concerns, and joys before God.

These prayers are a resource encouraging congregational members to pray together in the time of transition and can be used as part of the prayers of the people in worship.

Holy God, help us to see that the Church continues forever. Even as we go through the call process, allow us to use this time to pause and reflect upon the past and vision for the future. Allow us to make decisions that will empower this congregation and will please you. All this we ask in Jesus name. Amen.

Gracious God, save and defend your whole Church, purchased with the precious blood of Christ. Give it pastors and ministers filled with your Spirit and strengthen it through the Word and holy sacraments. Make it perfect in love and in all good works. Establish it in the faith delivered to the saints. Sanctify and unite your people in the entire world, that one holy Church may bear witness to you, the creator, and redeemer of all. Amen.

Gracious Lord, you know the skills and spiritual gifts that are needed to do ministry within this congregation. Please guide one with these qualities to us to be our shepherd. Lead this congregation in the way that you see best for all of your Church. Help us to continue to witness to your truth, and bless each member that we might remain strong in the faith. Keep each member faithful through this time that we might be regular in our worship, diligent in the sharing of the Eucharistic feast, eager to learn, and ever ready to do your will. We pray in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Almighty God, giver of every good gift; look upon this congregation with grace. Guide the minds of our Call Committee members as they discern which of your servants will be our next pastor. Please grant that we might receive a faithful shepherd who will care for us and continue to equip us for ministry in this place. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Most Merciful God, you are the great head of the Church. Look upon us with your favor as we enter the call process. Through this time, empower us, as your people that we might continue the ministry and witness begun in this place. Grant us the strength and the spirit of cooperation to do your will so that we, as a congregation, might continue to be a shining witness to you. Make us ready to assist our new leader in the work that lies ahead. Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Heavenly God, we lift before you all members of this congregation. We especially ask your blessing upon those who have been given the responsibility of finding a new pastor. Grant wisdom and right judgment to those who serve on our Call Committee. Guide them to the one who you have chosen to lead us. Grant them the vision to clearly see the leader who is to come among us. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Order of Prayer For and Affirmation of a Call Committee

May be used in worship; the congregation is seated; usually follows the creed. The leader is usually the Congregation Council president or it can be the supply pastor.

L: Sisters and brothers in Christ, God has called us to a new time in our life as a congregation. It is a time for reflection and prayer. It is a time for self-examination and discernment. It is a time for expectation and hope. We need a shepherd to lead our flock, and God has promised that a shepherd will be provided for us.

L: The following persons have been named to serve as the Call Committee of our church.
As the names are read, those persons present come forward to the chancel.

L: Dear friends, you have been duly named to serve as the Call Committee for this congregation in order to seek a pastor to shepherd and lead us.
The leader addresses the Call Committee.

Sacred scripture guides us in our task to seek a pastor who strives for righteousness and godliness, faith and love, endurance and gentleness; a pastor who is a servant as Christ himself was a servant; a pastor who leads with care and concern for God's flock; a pastor who is filled with the Holy Spirit and a trustworthy steward of the mysteries of God.

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

R: Yes, by the help of God.

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

R: Yes, by the help of God.

L: Will you seek the Lord's guidance through Holy Scripture and prayer and in your deliberations with your fellow committee members as you discern God's will for us?

R: Yes, by the help of God.

The leader addresses the congregation; they stand as they are able

L: People of God, do you promise to support these sisters and brothers and pray for them during this time of transition?

R: We do, and we ask God to help and guide us.

L: Let us pray. Merciful God,

R: we thank you that you have made us your own by water and the word in baptism. You have called us to yourself, enlightened us with the gifts of your Spirit, and nourished us in the community of faith. Let your great love hold us and create a deep trust within us. Guide us ever so gently during this time of change and graciously pour out your blessings upon us; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

L: Let us pray for those who serve on the congregation's Call Committee and for our church as we seek the Lord's guidance during this time of transition, and for all people according to their needs.

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

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

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

C: Send us a shepherd, O Lord.

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

C: Send us a shepherd, O Lord.

L: Send us a shepherd to comfort and care for us, to preach and teach your Word, to baptize and commune, to marry and counsel, to visit the sick and lay to rest, to guide and pray for us.

C: Send us a shepherd, O Lord.

L: Give us a holy patience in this time of discernment, a patience that trusts in you for our present and lasting care, knowing that you will bring our good work to fulfillment in your time.

C: O Lord, hear our prayer.

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

C: O Lord, hear our prayer.

L: Fill us all with your Holy Spirit and magnify our gifts of discernment that we might follow your will.

C: O Lord, hear our prayer.

L: Bless those who serve on the Call Committee, *the names of individual members can be lifted*. Give them the gifts they need to seek and find the pastor of your own nurturing; the shepherd of your own choosing that we might be fed by your holy Word and Sacraments and grow in faith, love, and ministry.

C: O Lord, hear our prayer.

(Other prayers regarding community life and the community's concerns may be added, including prayers for the sick, the grieving, and the needs of the world.)

L: Eternal God, you call us to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with courage not knowing where we are to go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen

The leader addresses the Call Committee.

L: We entrust you with discernment to select a minister to serve among us and give thanks that you have opened yourselves for service on the Call Committee. May God bring your good work to fulfillment in Christ's name.

C: Amen

L: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: And also with you.

All share the peace of the Lord. The liturgy continues as is customary after the peace.

The following sections will assist the Call Committee and Congregation Council as they consider expectations for the newly called pastor. The Call Committee also may use these sections as they discern questions on the Ministry Site Profile.

Worship

Worship involves both our attitudes and our actions. Worship is the attitude of reverence and adoration as well as the action of humble, loving service to God, who alone is worthy.

Describe a “typical” Sunday morning worship service.

In doing so, consider worship preparation...

- Who is responsible for opening the doors?
- Who is responsible for turning on the heat/air conditioner?
- Who prepares the bulletin?
- If there are lay people involved as acolytes, greeters, readers, ushers, assisting ministers, and in other capacities, who is responsible for arranging their involvement and training
- Who is responsible for preparing the communion table and baptismal font for the Sacraments?
- Who is responsible for the organist?

then, consider the liturgy...

- What worship setting(s) does the congregation use?
- How are hymns selected?
- How often is Communion celebrated?
- How are people of all ages, including the pastor, involved in the liturgy?

finally, think about worship administration...

- Is there a Worship Committee? What is their role?
- Does the church council have a role in relationship to the worship committee and worship planning?
- Is there an altar guild?
- What special services does the congregation celebrate...Advent? Christmas? Epiphany? Lent? Easter? Ascension? Pentecost? Reformation? All Saint's? others?
- Who is responsible to find supply pastors for the pastor's vacation Sundays?
- Who will be responsible if the pastor is ill on Sunday morning?
- Does the congregation have guidelines for baptisms, weddings, and funerals in the church?
 - If so, what are they? and, are they current?
 - If not, what are the expectations for a pastor in relationship to pre-baptismal and pre-marital counseling? what is expected of the pastor concerning non-member requests for baptisms, weddings, and funerals?
 - Are there costs associated with weddings in the church? Are they different for members and non-members?

Reflect on:

- How involved you are in worship?
- How does worship nurture your spirituality?
- What resources are needed to strengthen worship?
- Are liturgical supplies adequate?
- Is our worship service accessible to visitors?
- How do we respond to visitors at worship?

Education

Christian education is at the very heart of the church. In the educational process the Spirit of God encounters people of all ages so that they are nurtured in faith, grow in knowledge and experience, and are inspired and empowered to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. This call to discipleship compels us to share our faith and serve others in the home, the community, and in God's world.

Describe the educational opportunities offered in the congregation including:

Education Committee First Communion instruction
Confirmation Bible Study
Vacation Bible School Sunday Church School
Women of the ELCA Pre-school program
After-school program

In the discussion of these opportunities, consider what the roles of an Education committee, lay members, and the pastor are in these ministries.

- Who is responsible for planning?
- Who is responsible for teaching? and who, typically, recruits teachers?
- How are teachers trained?
- What curriculum is used? And how are decisions made about curriculum?
- Who typically orders materials?

Reflect on:

- How you are involved in education life of congregation.
- What is going well in education?
- What are the needs of the educational life of the congregation and how might they be addressed?
- What would help equip teachers and students?

Visitation and Congregational Care

Describe the congregation's current visitation and congregational care practices of:

Members

- How are they cared for in their homes?
- How are they cared for in their places of work?
- How are they cared for in times of crisis and celebrations?
- How are they cared for during seasons of the church year?
- How often are they visited? How often should they be visited by members? and by the pastor?

The hospitalized

- How often are they visited? How often should they be visited by members? and by the pastor?
- How often are those in Critical Care Units visited? How often should they be visited by members? and by the pastor? Are cards, flowers, or expressions of concern sent?
- How are members and the pastor made aware of those who are ill?
- Is there a prayer chain? If not, is that something that the congregation would like to develop?

Homebound and those living in nursing care facilities

- How often are they visited? How often should they be visited by members? and by the pastor?
- Are cards, flowers, or expressions of concern sent?
- Are members involved in worship at the nursing care facilities where members live?

- Are there special gifts shared with these members at certain times during the year?
- How are the homebound identified?
- Are there certain individuals who become homebound during certain seasons of the year, particularly winter?

Those in the military, college, or post-high school vocational schools

- Are cards or flowers sent?
- Are there special gifts shared with these members at certain times during the year?

Reflect on:

- What is your role in relationship to congregational care?
- What are the needs of the congregation?
- Are there lay ministry teams to visit members?
- If not, does the congregation want lay ministry teams to visit members? Does the congregation want lay ministry teams to distribute communion to those who are homebound or in nursing care facilities?
- How are the children and youth involved in visitation?

The Community and Larger Church

Our relationship to the community and larger church allows us to recognize that we are a part of Christ's body. While each congregation may work independently, God calls us through the Holy Spirit to work together with others as the Body of Christ as part of the Allegheny Synod and ELCA.

The following are meant to be used as a tool during the discussion and discernment of ministry in regard to the community and larger church.

Describe how the people of the congregation, including the pastor, have been involved in:

- **Community activities** – CROP walk, special appeals, food pantry, Girl or Boy Scouts, AA
- **Conference activities** – meetings, special worship, Bible study,
- **Synodical events** – Assembly, Synod committees, Congregations Together in Ministry, Youth events, Women of the Allegheny Synod
- **Ecumenical events** – worship, Bible school, special programs
- **Larger Church** – Churchwide Assembly, Social Statement hearings, support of Lutheran World Relief and Lutheran World Hunger, creation of health and school kits, quilts, fair trade coffee and chocolate, Blanket Sunday, Book of Faith Initiative, Women of the ELCA

Describe how the congregation has supported the pastor and lay leaders' involvement in conference, synodical, and ecumenical events. Is financial reimbursement included?

Reflect on:

- How are you personally involved in the community?
- How do you participate in the ministries of the larger church?
- In what ways might the congregation grow in their involvement in the community and larger church?
- What is needed to equip people for these ministries?

Leading and Equipping the People of God

Discuss the congregation's current mission statement.

- Does the congregation have a mission statement?
- Does it accurately depict the congregation's mission?
- Does it need to be re-visited?
- Do members know the congregation's mission statement?
- Describe the role of the pastor concerning development of mission statements and ministry goals
- Describe the role of the council and congregation concerning development of mission statements and ministry goals

Discuss the congregation's ministry spending plan.

- When is the budget prepared?
- How is the budget prepared?
- Who is responsible for budget preparation? Does it include the pastor?
- How is the budget communicated to members?
- How is the compensation benefits package developed for the pastor [and other staff]? Does the congregation use the Synodical Compensation and Benefits Guidelines for your planning?
- Describe the role of the pastor concerning development of the budget.
- Describe the role of the council and congregation concerning development the budget.

Practically speaking,

- What is the pastor's role in meetings? Which ones are required? Which are optional?
- Is the pastor responsible for supervising the staff?
- Is the pastor responsible for approving expenditures?
- What is the role of the Council and congregation in relationship to leading and equipping each another for ministry?

Stewardship Practices

Describe the congregation's stewardship practices

- a) What is the pastor's role in meetings? Which ones are required? Which are optional?
- b) Is the pastor responsible for supervising the staff?
- c) Is the pastor responsible for approving expenditures?
- d) What is the role of the pastor when the budget is set?
- e) What is the role of the pastor concerning developing mission statements and ministry goals?
- f) What is the role of the Council and congregation in relationship to leading and equipping one another for ministry?

General Concerns

- a) How many hours do you expect the pastor to work in a week?
- b) How many days off will the pastor have each week?
- c) What are the priorities of ministry that the pastor should follow?
- d) What amount of time is allotted for the pastor's devotional life and reading?
- e) How many weeks vacation, including Sundays, are provided for the pastor?
- f) List other expectations you have for the pastor, Council, and Congregation.

