

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

By the grace of God, wisdom, joy and peace to you!

Calling a pastor to your congregation begins by calling the Holy Spirit to inspire, guide, challenge, encourage and even surprise you. We urge you to pray often, fervently and expectantly. And, we promise that the Synod Office will be praying for you.

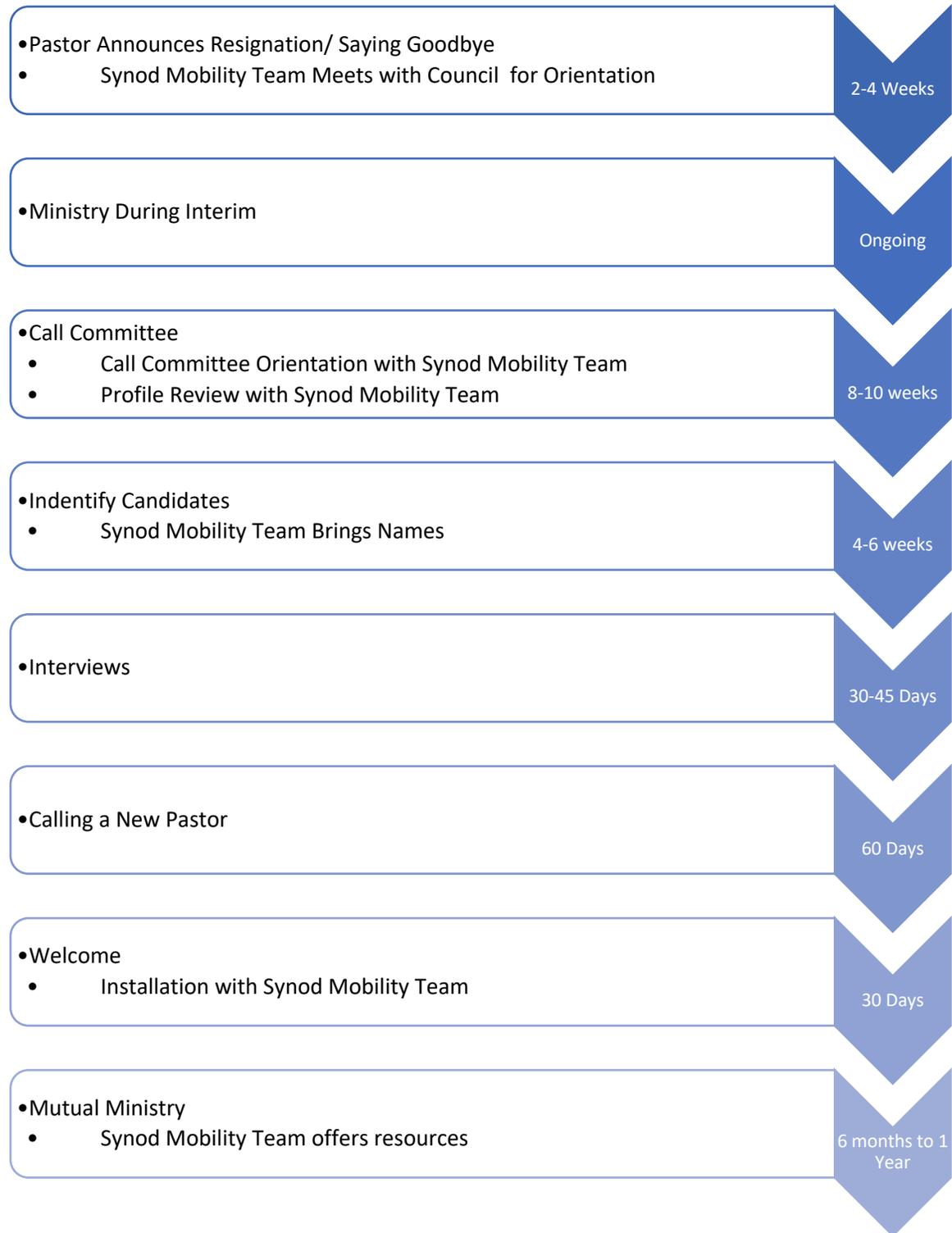
The pages in this handbook are valuable ones for your Congregation Council and Call Committee to read. Here you will find helpful information to guide you from the time one pastor resigns through the installation of a new pastor.

South-Central Synod of Wisconsin is eager for you to experience the call process as a healthy, trusting and faithful partnership between council, call committee, congregation members and synod staff. We will work hard with you and for you in the days ahead. Do not hesitate to ask us for help when you need it. You can merely contact the office at 608-270-0201.

Direct us, Lord God, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and extend us your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name; and finally, by your mercy, bring us to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

ORIENTATION TO THE CALL PROCESS

AVERAGE CALL PROCESS TIMELINE



DETAILED CHECKLIST

*BLUE=CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES ORANGE=CALL COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES
RED=SYNOD OFFICE*

- Receive Resignation Letter
- Contact Synod Office
- Congregational Council Orientation with Synod Office**
- Exit Interview
- Sign Ethics of Transition and Return Copy to the synod office
- Plan Farewell Celebration
- Contact Portico
- Find Supply Pastor to cover before an Interim
- Synod working on identifying an Interim**
- Introduction with Interim, Sign Interim Contract**
- Form Transition Team with Interim's help
- Begin Transition work (gathering information from congregation and community for Ministry Site Profile)
- Work on Ministry Site Profile
- Form Call Committee (check constitution)
- Finalize Ministry Site Profile & Submit to ELCA
- Create Call Process Budget
- Installation of Call Committee
- Complete Profile and send to ELCA**
 - Council (job description and financial sections)
 - Congregational Surveys**
 - Call Committee complete remaining sections**
- Synod Office Meets to Review Profile and Discuss Interviewing
- Give Suggested Candidate's Names to Synod Office (optional)
- Receive Names from Synod Office
- Contact Candidates**
- Prepare Interview Questions**
- Mock Interview**
- Do Interviews**
- Contact All Candidates with Decisions**
- Reimburse for expense vouchers**
- Check References**
- Do Background Check**
- Call Committee Recommendation to Congregational Council**
- Contact Synod Office with Updates**
- Congregational Council Votes
- Discuss Financial Package with Candidate
- Congregational Council Calls Congregational Meeting
- Congregational Vote
- Contact Candidate with Results**
- Prepare Letter of Call
- Acknowledge Transitional Ministry
- Pay Moving Expenses
- Schedule Installation with Synod Office
- Notify Portico

UNDERSTANDING CALL

At the heart of our Lutheran theology is something Martin Luther termed “the priesthood of all believers.” In our baptism God has called us all to be part of the body of Christ. Luther reminded us of the Latin origin of the word “vocation” -*vocare* - which means “to call.” All of us take up our vocations - our callings – as God's people. We are all ministers in whatever daily activity is ours. Within this priesthood of all believers there exists the ordained office of ministry, the “office of Word and Sacrament”

On the basis of our Lutheran theology, a pastor is called, not hired, to serve a congregation. The call process is not the same as the hiring process in other parts of society. Any process that seems to focus on “head hunting,” resume shuffling, or high anxiety interviews is missing the point in the calling of a pastor. A call is one element in the church’s seeking and following God’s movement into the future.

The call process is not a pageant, in which contestants present themselves to their best advantage so they will be the winners. The Lutheran call process is unique because **it offers several opportunities to “look” at a pastoral candidate** in an effort to discern what God wants for the local church and for the whole church in order that the Gospel may be proclaimed and the sacraments administered in accordance with the Gospel.

WHAT THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION SAYS

The Lutheran Church looks to the documents called “The Lutheran Confessions” for its understanding of scripture, the faith and the church. Chief among these documents is the Augsburg Confession, adopted by the reformers in the city of Augsburg (Germany) in 1530. These short, concise statements help us understand the nature of the office of ministry in the Lutheran Church:

We cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions. We receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us.

(Article IV, The Augsburg Confession)

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel.

(Article V, The Augsburg Confession)

Nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call. All Christians are called to the ministry of serving God and neighbor, but for the sake of good order in the church certain Christians are specially called to the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament.

(Article XIV, The Augsburg Confession)

THE CALL TO MINISTRY

It is through the church that God calls some Christians to ordained ministry. Once that call is discerned, the candidate normally devotes years to study, training, and preparation under the guidance of the whole church through the Bishop and the Candidacy Committee.

In a similar way, it is through the church that God calls ordained ministers to a specific pastorate. Not only does the local congregation participate in the call process, but so does the whole church through the office of the Bishop. Just as the whole church took an active role in the call to ordination, so now the whole church takes an active role in the call to a specific ministry.

This is shown in the fact that once a person is approved for ordination, the candidate must receive and accept a call to a specific ministry in order to be ordained. Ordination may occur in a local church, but it is always an ordination by the whole church as shown in the presence of the Bishop at the ordination service.

THE CHURCH AND CALL

The local church is fully the church, but the local church is not all the church there is. The local church calls a person to be its pastor, but the whole church has a stake in who is called and how the call process is handled.

The Call Committee, the Congregation Council and, eventually, the entire congregation participate fully in the process. So does the Bishop who represents both the interest and the commitment of the whole church in seeing that the pastor called is suited to ministry under the call that is extended.

The Bishop's office has a deep concern for the well being of the congregation's life and ministry. The Bishop and the staff also have a deep concern for the person and gifts of the prospective pastor. In the call process the Bishop and staff, the congregation, and the prospective pastor work together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to bring about a new partnership that is faithful to the Gospel, empowers the local church in its ministry, and strengthens the whole church as people of God.

SAYING GOODBYE

The timeline on page 6 is simply an estimate for how long the call process may take. Each step is important along the way and congregations are encouraged not to hurry the process of calling a new pastor. When the pastor resigns or retires, the primary concern for many congregations is to find a new pastor quickly. However, the interim period between the leaving of one pastor and the arrival of another can give the congregation necessary and valuable time and space for the grief of saying goodbye to your spiritual leader. It is also a good time for reassessing its mission and possibly reordering its ministry for the future. In some circumstances an intentional long term interim can be a great opportunity for vision and healing. In other circumstances a short interim is appropriate.

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING A RESIGNATION

When a pastor accepts a new call, the pastor will normally notify the congregational leadership first, then the congregation through a letter to all members. Normally the end date is no less than 15 days and no more than 30 days from the time of announcement, and any accrued vacation is taken at the end of the tenure. It will be important to have this in writing, so there is no confusion during this emotional time of saying goodbye. (For instance, if a pastor announces her leaving in early September and has two weeks of vacation accrued, the pastor may announce "My resignation will be effective October 30, with the last two weeks of October taken as vacation. My last Sunday will be October 16." The congregation pays all salary and benefits through October 30, though all expenses (car allowance, etc.) would end as of October 16. You will want to notify the synod office as soon as this happens so that we can begin to work together on the many steps that will come. An orientation for the Congregational Council and the Synod Office should be scheduled as soon as possible. This transition time before the interim minister can start is usually covered by a supply pastor. The most current supply pastor list is on the synod website at www.scsw-elca.org. This list will also give current mileage reimbursement and worship supply compensation.

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING RETIREMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

When a pastor discerns it is time for the end of public ministry, the pastor will normally notify the congregation and the bishop. This announcement may happen several months before the actual retirement date. An orientation for the Congregational Council and the Synod Office should be scheduled for close to the time of retirement. This time will allow the congregation and the Synod Office to think intentionally about celebrating the many years of ministry of the pastor and time to think about the next steps in the life of the congregation after the pastor's retirement.

EXIT INTERVIEW

The pastor who is leaving has come to know the congregation from the intimate perspective of the pastoral office. Both the congregation and the synod are well-served by learning what insights the pastor has to share as she or he takes leave. The Exit Interview offers this opportunity. It is also a time for the congregational leadership to become more fully aware of dynamics that might affect the next pastorate, both positively and negatively.

The Exit Interview is an opportunity for looking back and reflecting on the life and ministry to which both pastor and congregation have contributed, celebrating the successes, acknowledging the failures, and bringing closure to things unresolved.

The departing pastor should be invited to participate in an exit interview and the invitation should stress the distinctively positive nature of the interview and its goals. The pastor should be made aware that even though strongly recommended, it is an optional event. He/she should be given the choice of who within the congregation should be included.

The interview should take about an hour. Choose a site that is comfortable and non-threatening, the Congregation Council meeting area for example. Remember this should be a positive experience, both in terms of the reflection that will be undertaken and the insights which will be gained about the future. Someone, perhaps the Council President, should take the role as moderator, to keep the meeting on agenda. Begin with prayer or a devotion. Council members should be ready to comment and participate in the conversation. Be attentive to both the intellectual and emotional content. Honesty and respect should characterize the meeting. This is not a time to “vent”. It is an opportunity to rejoice in the ministry which has been completed and to begin to anticipate the future ministry. After the interview has been completed, the process ends with a closing prayer. Someone should be designated to take careful notes, to be shared with a Call Committee, the Synod Office and perhaps even the pastor(s) being considered for call. If the pastor chooses not to be present, we recommend that the exit evaluation process still be completed without the pastor.

The Exit Interview is an opportunity for looking back and reflecting on the life and ministry to which both pastor and congregation have contributed, celebrating the successes, acknowledging the failures, and bringing closure to things unresolved

Sample Exit Interview Questions

The following are some “dialogue starter” questions which might be used:

To the Pastor:

- “What were your hopes and dreams for the congregation when you began your ministry here?”
- “What have been some of your joys during your ministry here?”
- “What have been some of your sorrows during your ministry here?”
- “What surprised you about your ministry here?”
- What do you believe to be the strength(s) of our congregation?
- “What are some of your present concerns for the congregation as you bring your ministry to a close?”
- “Are the records of the congregation up to date?” See Exit Checklist.

To the Members:

- “What gifts/strengths has Pastor _____ given to this congregation during his/her ministry among you?”
- In what areas might Pastor _____ need to work and grow for his/her next call?
- “Are there events or memories which had special meaning that anyone would like to share?”
- “Are there humorous events which would not prove to be too embarrassing that anyone would like to share?”
- “How will Pastor _____ be remembered by the members of _____ Lutheran Church?”

EXIT CHECKLIST

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

Parish Record Book: Are the following records up to date?

____ Baptisms ____ Deaths ____ Weddings ____ Communion
____ Confirmations ____ Transfers In ____ Transfers Out ____ Others:

Records of Membership: Are there lists of:

____ Members in good standing ____ Members in college
____ Inactive members ____ Members in military service
____ Is active membership list realistic? ____ When were these last updated?

Parochial Reports

- _____ Annual ELCA parochial records are kept where?
- _____ Congregational Annual Reports are kept where?

Church Council Records: List the locations of:

- _____ Current year's minutes
- _____ Past year's minutes
- _____ Committee Reports
- _____ Parish goals, long-range plans
- _____ Unfinished Council Business

Congregational Records: List the locations of:

- _____ Minutes of congregational meetings
- _____ Church archives
- _____ Volunteer Screenings/Background Checks

Parish Correspondence:

- _____ Where is correspondence kept?
- _____ Any pending matters?

Financial Concerns: Where are the following located?

- _____ Financial Records
- _____ What is the process for paying bills?
- _____ Bank accounts (who manages them?)
- _____ Deeds
- _____ Endowments
- _____ Insurance Policies

Pastoral Care and Ministry:

- Is there a potential member/prospect list? Where?
- Any adult baptism or adult instruction potentials?
- Any families needing infant baptism?
- Confirmation Class list. What is the next step for them? Where is the curriculum?
- Any Weddings Scheduled?
- List of persons in need of ministry.
- Particular problems needing attention
- List of shut-ins?
- Any special events?
- Other?

Ethics of Transition:

- Document Read and Signed by Pastor
- Document Read and Signed by Congregation Representative
- Copy sent to Synod Office

From the Constitution of the South-Central Synod

S14.15 The parochial records of each congregation shall be kept in a separate book which shall remain the congregation's property. The secretary of the congregation shall attest to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his/her hands in good order by a departing pastor...

PORTICO

As a sponsoring congregation or organization, you will need to notify Portico when a pastor or rostered layperson will no longer serve under call to your church organization. You will need the form named *End of call notification - for pastors or rostered laypersons*. The form can be found at <https://employerlink.porticobenefits.org/Home/Resources.aspx> or by calling Portico at 800.352.2876. You can also use this form to report any post-employment contributions.

The pastor/rostered leader will also have similar paperwork to fill out for a change of call.