



**South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**
God's work. Our hands.

Phase Two: Interim Begins & Time for Self-Study

The Purpose of the Transition Team

The purpose of the transition team is to mobilize discovery and generate the capacity to thrive anew. This team allows the Congregational Council to focus on continuing to support the ministries of the congregation and the regular business of the church. A Transition Team is a key part of the interim ministry. The Interim Pastor is a specialist in transition and not attached to any preferred history, current reality or future possibility, but can facilitate conversations where many views are expressed. Transition Teams are the local experts in the congregation and community.

The two major goals are

- 1) to discover a new and deepened sense of identity and purpose for the congregation
- 2) to establish a healthy relationship with the next pastoral leader who will walk with the congregation toward the renewed sense of purpose.

Other purposes of the transition team are:

- To help congregational members grieve after the loss of their pastor and to gain perspective on the chapter of congregational life that has now ended.
- To gather the feelings and ideas of both members of the congregation and people living in the surrounding community about their church.
- To provide a forum for sharing and focusing hopes and aspirations for the future.
- To help the congregation move from a preoccupation with the past to a state of readiness for a new chapter in its life under the leadership of a new pastor.
- To involve the congregation in accomplishing the developmental tasks of the intentional interim period.

The members of the transition team commit to the unique opportunity presented in the transition time. It is a time of high challenge for any congregation, a time for self-assessment, and a time for visioning and recommitment to mission and ministry. The overall goal is to bring the congregation into a state of readiness to move forward under the leadership of a new pastor.

Forming a Transition Team

The Holy Spirit is on the move in a congregation in transition. In the week and months, the arrival of the intentional interim pastor, it is highly recommended that a transition team be created. This team will be responsible for research, analysis, documentation, and study. The team (which is different than the Call Committee) will be appointed by the Congregational Council and is responsible for getting the congregation ready before the Call Committee begins the work of calling a new pastor. Ways to involve the entire congregation may be to request that each person nominate two trusted members for the Council to consider; to introduce the team (once formed) at a worship service, and to bless or commission the team. This Transition process will take as long as needed to gather and assess information before a Call Committee is in place. The intentional interim pastor will lead you through this process using a variety of tools. The five to seven individuals on the transition team work closely with the intentional interim pastor to plan and guide a process that invites the whole congregation into a time of self-reflection, preparing the congregation for a new future with a new called pastor.

A transition team must

- Value each team member's contributions and take suggestions and ideas seriously.
- Listen.
- Become acquainted with resources for gathering and evaluating information.
- Hold and honor confidentiality.
- Foster the trust of the church membership.
- Gather the information needed to create a congregational vision, establish goals, and define activities for the future ministry of the church.
- Collate and interpret information gathered from the congregation and its life and vision of the future.

The Work of the Transition Team: The Five Developmental Tasks

The transition team will work with the congregation to focus on five central developmental tasks.

1. **Coming to terms with history** The congregation gathers to remember all the stories. They tell one another (especially those who have recently joined) the congregational stories, reminding one another who the congregation has been. They make sense of how God has been active in their history, through the ups and downs of the past. They tell public stories (and even personal ones) of who and what they have loved and lost. In addition, churches sometimes have "old issues" or conflict which never was fully resolved, and which tends to re-surface in unsettling times.

All of this remembering is critical so that the community can be invited to let go before they are asked to imagine a new future with a new pastor. A couple of ideas to help include but are not limited to:

- a. **Create a Wall of History** : To help visualize the history of the congregation, cover a large wall in paper and create a timeline from the beginning of the congregation to today. Have people write important events and people in the life of the congregation or society at large.
 - b. **Small Group Exploration:** Gather together and find out what are the best things about living in your community? Look at your community with a different kind of lens? What could the church do to possibly make life better here? How are we involved in our communities? Some of these activities lead directly into the MSP info.
 - c. **Demographic Information:** Go to www.elca.org/research Click “View Now” under Demographic Reports. Type in the Synod ID (5K) and your congregation ID.
2. **Discovering a new identity** The congregation is asked a variety of questions: Who and what are they becoming as a congregation, and how has our context changed over the years? What gifts (assets) define us; not simply our building or staff, but our changing participants and neighbors? We need to watch and listen, not only for what to conserve, but for what might be emerging in the midst of this new identity. These questions also form the basis for the MSP pastoral needs description.
 3. **Managing shifts in leadership** Congregations in an interim time often experience shifts in power of leadership depending on the relationships of individuals to the former pastor. This is also a time for considering whether patterns of involvement in the church are healthy or unhealthy, empowering or disempowering for most of the congregation. The task is to see that leadership develops in positive and creative ways for the good of the whole church.
 4. **Strengthening our sense of being the church together** We are not only a local congregation, but part of a regional, national, and global church. How closely do we identify with our South-Central Synod of Wisconsin and the national church body of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? What has been our connection with our ecumenical brothers and sisters? What can we ask of them and offer to them?
 5. **Committing to our new future and a new leadership** As the work of the preceding four developmental tasks (coming to terms with our history, discovering a new identity, managing shifts in leadership, and strengthening our sense of being the church together) comes to maturity, the congregation becomes clear about their future so they can invite

an appropriate new pastoral leader to lead them into that new future. Other new staffing should be considered on conditional basis, so that the called pastor can determine future staffing.

The Work of the Transition Team: Other Tasks

The transition team will also attend to the following details, with the help of the Intentional Interim Pastor:

- Update the current congregational constitution
- Study the congregation and the surrounding community
- Establish and/or affirm core values
- Develop and/or affirm mission statement
- Affirm vision statement • Review staffing needs and concerns and update job descriptions
- Review policies and procedures
- Assess the congregation's financial reality
- Assess the congregation's stewardship of resources
- Assess the congregation's structural and property issues

If these have been recently addressed (in the last 1-3 years), they could be simply reviewed to discern if they still apply or need some revision due to current circumstances.

Report from the Transition Team:

After the congregation has spent time in self-study, collecting data, and tightening up the infrastructure of the congregation, the transition team will prepare a transition report to be shared with the Council, the congregation, and the Office of the Bishop. This transition document will then be morphed into the Ministry Site Profile.

Thankful for our partners in ministry who helped shape this document and provide resources.

Rocky Mountain Synod ELCA

St Paul MN Synod ELCA