

CALL COMMITTEE

FORMING A CALL COMMITTEE

Calling a pastor to a congregation is an important event. We believe it is our Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, who guides the call process. The calling of a pastor represents a valuable partnership between God, the calling congregation and the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. An ideal call process builds on trust, openness, and good communication. When the call process results in a good match between pastor and congregation, the total mission of the church is furthered.

In the call process the Synod Office, 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. The role of the Synod Office is to be in partnership with the congregation and with potential candidates for ministry in your congregation. It is not the intention or purpose of the Synod Office to direct or in any way coerce either party during the call process.

The foremost question for the call committee always is whether this is the person God desires this congregation to have as its pastor. That is why every meeting of the call committee should include prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the work that is being done.

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Spirit works through committed Christians to help the church be faithful to its calling. It gave them an opportunity to see how the local church is vitally connected to the whole church. And being on the call committee let them participate in opening a new chapter in the life and ministry of their church.

The constitution governing your congregation will prescribe appointment or election of a call committee. You may choose, if allowable by the constitution, to ask for nominations from the

congregation. These are just that, nominations, and not guarantees for positions on the call committee.

The composition of the call committee, after prayerful consideration, should intentionally reflect the makeup of the congregation. There should be a diverse representation of gender, age, and ethnic/racial identity on the committee. All segments of the ministry of the congregation should be represented (Worship, Youth, Education, Evangelism, etc.). You will want strong spiritual individuals who are regular worshippers, prayerful, read Scripture regularly for their personal devotion, and those who share of their God given talents and resources. Beyond these considerations, there should also be a balance of long-term and newer members, people from

different elements of the congregation, drawing upon a variety of contributing styles and gifts. This is not an appropriate place to invite an inactive member to become more active. This is also not an appropriate place for the congregation member who has an axe to grind or for a congregation member with an outspoken agenda that may not be in coordination with the mission of the congregation. An effective Call Committee is usually more than five people and fewer than nine.

The call committee may also take a different shape at a congregation with more than one pastor. For this situation, please see the section *Multiple Pastor Situations* on page 41.

It is advisable to have one congregation council member, who is not the president, sit on the Call Committee as a liaison. The council representative should not have a vote on the Call Committee, but this may depend on the constitution of the congregation. The council representative will report back to the Congregation Council on the progress of the Call Committee, but he/she may not violate the confidences of the Call Committee. The council instructs the chairperson of the call committee to contact the Synod Office in order to schedule a call process orientation for the call committee.

Committee Structure

The Call Committee Chairperson can be appointed by the Congregation Council or be elected by the Committee itself. The leaders include a Chair, Recording Secretary, Communicator and Spiritual Guide.

Chair convenes meetings, sets meeting agendas, will be the primary contact with candidates, will likely also be the contact person with the Synod Staff, and oversees the Call Process. The Chair is also responsible for written communication between candidates and the committee (letters informing candidates of committee's time line and the interview process to be used, confirming invitations, travel arrangements, thank you notes, and letters informing candidates of decisions reached), sends copies of correspondence to the synod office.

Secretary keeps the minutes of Call Committee meetings. While motions may not necessarily be made, committee assignments need to be recorded for future reference. The Secretary may also be responsible for final preparation of the Ministry Site Profile.

Communicator, helps to build trust with the congregation with regular updates. This may writing the newsletter articles, notes for Sunday bulletins, website updates, bulletin boards, write weekly worship prayers, schedule short announcements from the Call Committee during worship and anything that will keep the congregation informed of committee's progress. The Communicator may also be in charge of posting the job description more broadly than just with the synod (newspapers, professional journals, websites, etc.)

Spiritual Guide helps to coordinate the spiritual life of the call committee. The Call Committee should bathe each meeting with prayer and Bible study. The Spiritual Guide should not always be the doer of these important tasks but an equipper and coordinator.

Please provide the Synod Office with the name, phone, and e-mail contact information for your council president and call committee chair person.

Communication

Communication is very important to the Call Process. While the Call Committee will be well aware of all of the details of the process, the congregation will not. Good communication is the very tool for building trust between the call committee and congregation. Without timely accurate information from the Call Committee, rumors and mistrust can bubble up surprising the Call Committee and compromising their work. Every means ought to be utilized to keep the members of the congregation informed about the Call Committee's work and progress, including but not limited to:

- Newsletter articles explaining the Call Process to the congregation, with follow up articles each time another stage in the process is reached.
- Notes in the Sunday morning bulletins.
- Website updates.
- Temple talks by members of the Call Committee to update the congregation.
- Question and answer forums during education hours.
- Photos and/or contact information easily accessible so congregation members can contact the Call Committee with questions and concerns.

With the exception of sharing confidential information, it is hard to imagine a Call Committee communicating too often or sharing too much information with the congregation. Conversely, it is often the case that a Call Committee communicates too infrequently and unclearly.

A general time line and process for the Call Committee's work should be proposed and announced to the congregation. This may be modified as the Call Process unfolds, but any changes should be communicated to the congregation.

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Budget

One of the first tasks of the Call Committee, after prayer, is to establish a Call Committee Budget. This needs to be done with the Congregation Council. Some of the items that need to consider in the budget are:

- Office Expenses (i.e., photocopying, data entry, postage, etc.)
- Hospitality/Meal Expenses for Interviews
- Travel Expenses for Candidate(s)
- Travel Expenses for Committee to Visit Candidate(s) at their current setting.
- Background Check Fees for Candidate(s)
- Miscellaneous Expenses

Although some of these expenses are difficult to accurately determine ahead of time (such as travel expenses for the candidate), every effort should be made to set aside the needed finances for the call process.

Installation of Call Committee

It is important that the ministry of those who have been selected to serve on the Call Committee be recognized in some formal way by the congregation. The Committee members will spend many hours in prayer and meetings, expending significant energy over many months during the course of their service. The installation rite below is an example of how a Call Committee might be recognized by a congregation during worship. If appropriate you may also consider using resources in the Evangelical Lutheran Worship Occasional Service book for elected officers.

An Installation of the Call Committee

P=Interim Pastor C=Congregation CC=Call Committee members

P: Let us pray. Gracious God, in times of change and transition you provide leaders to guide and direct us. Through them, you lead us over the rough places, and comfort us when we are afraid. We pray today that you will send your Spirit to be with these leaders and each one of us during this time of discernment. We ask in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

P: Do you, the people of ____(*church*)____ promise to hold this Call Committee in prayer?

C: We do.

P: Will you accept their leadership, support them in their work, and encourage them in their deliberation?

C: We will.

P: (*To the Call Committee*) - You have prayerfully been called to serve this congregation in selecting a pastoral candidate. You have been asked to give generously of your time. You have been entrusted with this responsibility on behalf of the whole congregation. Do you accept this responsibility and trust?

C: We do.

P: Will you faithfully participate in the process, support one another in meetings, and call upon the Holy Spirit for guidance and direction in all you do?

C: We will.

P: Let us pray - Lord, Bless this committee, its work and guide its decisions, that through them we might all be strengthened to serve you. Bless each member of the committee, that he or she might have the compassion, wisdom and energy to fulfill this responsibility. Keep us strong in faith and resolute in proclaiming the gospel to all people. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL RESOURCES FOR THE CALL COMMITTEE

The time of calling a pastor can be a special time for reflection and prayer in the life of a congregation. This time of transition is an opportunity for the Congregation Council to provide encouragement, trust in God, unity and spiritual growth. Prayer, bible study, and regular devotions keep the leadership spiritually centered as it guides the congregation in grieving its loss, assessing the current congregational strengths and weaknesses, creating a vision for mission and ministry, and calling a new pastor.

Prayer

Prayer is an important activity for the Call Committee and the entire congregation throughout the Call Process. Call Committee members are encouraged to commit themselves to daily pray for one another and for the work of the Holy Spirit among them as they seek to discern God's will for their congregation. Special prayer at worship and during other meetings of the congregation is encouraged. Begin your time in prayer, end in prayer, break in the middle for prayer. The following prayers are provided as examples for Call Committee and Congregational use. Please do not limit yourself to these prayers however.

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DURING THE INTERIM TIME:

Loving God, be with us and guide us during this time of discernment. Fill our leaders with your wisdom. Keep us mindful of the work you would have us do. Lead us and guide us O Lord to be about the work of your kingdom even as the search for a new pastor continues. Bless all who have taken on extra responsibility, and fill them with a sense of your love and presence. We pray in your Son's name, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

DURING INTERVIEWS:

God, keep us mindful of your presence among us as we seek to discern your will for us. We pray that you will help us see beyond our own needs to the needs of your whole church. We pray that you will open our eyes to new possibilities and opportunities of being your people. Guide us and lead us O Lord. Amen.

AT MEETINGS:

Life giving God, create among us a desire to do your will. Open our hearts to your Word. Lead us as we seek to lead. Guide us as we seek to guide. God, we desire a new pastor to be among us to lead us and walk with us direct us as we wait. Bless all who serve in the congregation, especially those who have the responsibility to lead us in the call process. Bless us Lord Jesus. Amen.

Bible Study

The following are just a few Bible verses that may be used for devotions or bible study during the call process.

- Matthew 28: 16-20
- The Call of Matthew: Matthew 9:9-13
- Call of the first Disciples: Luke 5: 1-11
- Romans 12: 1-8 (9-21)
- I Corinthians 3:1-9
- Ephesians 6: 10-18
- Philippians 2: 1-11
- I Timothy
 - 2: Instructions concerning Prayer
 - 3: 1-7 Qualifications of Bishops
 - 3: 8-13 Qualifications of Deacons
 - 4: 6-16 a Good Minister of Jesus Christ

Reflections on God's Call:

Call of Young People:

- Samuel : I Samuel 2:1- 3:18
- Mary: Luke 1: 26-38

Call of Elderly

- Elizabeth and Zechariah : Luke 1
- Abraham and Samuel: Genesis 18: 9:15
- Simeon and Anna: Luke 2: 22-38

Call of the Disciples:

- Follow Me: Matthew 4:18-22, Mk:1-16-20; Luke 5: 1-11

Reflections on Being the Church:

- Read The Book of Acts together. Read one chapter a week begin meetings by reflecting on recent readings and the ministry of your congregation.