

# **Pastoral Transition**

## **A Guide for Lay Leaders**



**Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## **Pastoral Transition ~ A Guide for Lay Leaders**

### **Acknowledgements**

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The majority of this Guide was written by Edward Kane, Richard Mathisen, and Jeffrey Ziegler, experienced Intentional Interim Pastors of the SEPA Synod. Their work was supported by a subcommittee of SEPA's Transitional Ministry Development Team, including Arlene Greenwald, Lawrence Hand, Irma Kelly, Ellen Meissgeier, and Jill Meuser. Most of this Guide was written in 2010 with several revisions, including 2015. The Guide was revised in 2018 and 2019 by current membership of the SEPA Synod's Transitional Ministry Development Team: Marcia Bell, Sandra Brown, Fritz Fowler, Regina Goodrich, Teri Lanan, Karl McClellan, Christian McMullan, and Donna Wright.

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*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland” (Isaiah 43:18-19)*

Greetings Beloved,

God tells us that He is doing a new thing, a good new thing! God promises a way for us in the wilderness, and God is giving us streams of living water in times when we may feel like we are in the wastelands. Your community of faith/congregation is embarking on a journey filled with farewell, discernment and a grand welcome of your new pastor. You are entering a time of transition that will be informational, inspirational, educational and foundational to your ministry and your mission in the Kingdom of God.

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has built a cadre of specially trained pastors and laypeople to walk with you in this season of discernment as you seek God’s will for your community of faith/congregation. You have in your hands this *Pastoral Transition: A Guide for Lay Leaders* to be used in this liminal space between now and your next called pastor. This guide outlines all of the steps of the Office of the Bishop to assure that you are accompanied through this transitional process with competent, skilled, and experienced leadership. Your Transitional Minister has expertise in assisting you through the anguish of your pastor leaving into exciting and innovative ministry possibilities with you and your new pastor.

I hope, pray and trust that God’s Holy Spirit will lead, guide, and direct your steps daily on this unique journey of new beginnings.

+In Christ,

The Rev. Patricia Davenport  
Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod



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## Introduction

### Welcome

When a congregation loses its pastor, it enters into the "interim period" – the period of time between two regularly-called pastors. The interim period may be difficult for the congregation as it grieves the loss of the previous pastor and enters into a period of uncertainty. However, the interim period can also be a very positive and productive time for the congregation, as it re-examines its reason for existence and seeks to discern God's calling and purpose for it in the future.

The congregational lay leadership may understandably feel it is facing a challenging and unfamiliar new task. It is helpful then to remember that the congregations and other ministries of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (SEPA Synod) "walk together." The congregation whose pastor is leaving is not alone. The Synod has resources to help a congregation at such a time. With a specially-trained Interim Pastor or Consultant, and using tools and approaches based on current research and the best methods available, the congregation will be helped to journey through a carefully-designed interim process.

MORE: [Flowchart of Transition Process](#) Page 7  
[Definition of Terms](#) Page 8

### Understanding this Guide

Written to assist a congregation's lay leadership after a pastor resigns, this Guide is one of the resources provided by the Synod for congregations during the interim period. It is a guide, not a manual, as the process will vary according to each congregation's unique circumstances.

There are two layers of information in the Guide:

- Introduction and Phase Steps – a brief introductory overview of this Guide and of the four phases of the transition process, followed by a step-by-step description of the details of each phase.
- Resource Documents – a collection of documents, forms, samples, and additional information that are used in each phase.

### Getting Started

It is recommended that when a congregation knows it will be entering a time of pastoral transition, this Guide immediately be printed and made available to the Congregation Council. It is a rich resource to return to again and again throughout the entire interim period, from the first announcement of the pastor's resignation to the welcoming of the new pastor.

Additional materials in the Resource Documents are noted throughout this Guide as follows:

MORE: [Two Most Common Mistakes](#) Page 17

### On-Screen Reading of the Guide

As an alternative to printing, the Guide may be read on a computer screen. It can be downloaded from the SEPA website:

<https://ministrylink.org/resources/library/pastoral-transition-guide/>

For this approach, all the titles in the "MORE" boxes are links to the named Resource Documents. Additionally, navigational tools for moving from page to page are available for either Windows PC or Mac users. However, to gain access to these tools, the Guide must be downloaded and opened on the local computer rather than read on the website. For Windows PC users, the Guide will download into Adobe Reader. Windows PC users can make sure they have the most current version of Adobe Reader by downloading it free from:

<https://get.adobe.com/reader/otherversions/>

For Mac users, the Guide will download by default into Mac's Preview software. Perhaps the quickest and easiest navigational method of all is this one:

**WINDOWS PC USERS:** After clicking a link to another page in the Guide, you can return to the location from which you clicked using the keyboard shortcut, **ALT+Left Arrow**. Along with the **ALT+Right Arrow** shortcut, it is easy to move back and forth between the two locations.

**MAC USERS:** The keyboard shortcuts are **command+]** and **command+[**

## *Brief Overview of the Four Phases*

### **Phase One:**

#### **After a Pastor Resigns or Retires**

Phase One of the interim process begins when a pastor resigns or departs for any reason. As a pastor leaves, it is important to find a way to say goodbye and to begin to define appropriate boundaries so that the congregation is able to receive another individual as the pastor. If you are a congregation president or lay leader, Phase One describes the actions that should be taken by you in consultation with the Synod's Office of the Bishop in order to begin the process of selecting your next pastor. Phase One ends in the selection of a qualified Interim Pastor, as specified in the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations (Section C9.06). In the SEPA Synod, we normally use a specially-trained pastor known as an Intentional Interim Pastor (hereafter referred to as Interim Pastor or Interim). However, other interim resources may be available, such as Consultants, and Bridge Pastors. They are all Transition Ministers.

MORE: [Importance of Healthy Boundaries](#) Page 18

### **Phase Two:**

#### **Self-Study & Visioning Process, Congregational Profile**

Phase Two of the interim process begins with the welcoming of the Interim Pastor or Consultant. The Interim Pastor or Consultant will lead the work of interim ministry by following a widely-accepted process known as the Five Focus Points for a congregation in transition. The purpose of the focus points is to help the congregation conduct a study of itself and its situation, to develop a vision of the future mission to which God is calling this congregation, and to discern the type of pastor and the pastoral characteristics needed to lead the congregation to fulfill that vision. Phase Two concludes with the preparation of a package of material called the Congregational Profile, and its submission to and approval by the Synod's Office of the Bishop.

MORE: [Interim Ministry Best Practices](#) Page 19

### **Phase Three:**

#### **The Call Process**

Phase Three of the interim process is the Call Process. The Call Process begins when the Congregational Profile has been approved by the Synod's Office of the Bishop. At this point, the congregation selects a Call Committee. That Call Committee receives the names of possible pastoral candidates in a highly confidential process. After the Call Committee interviews pastoral candidate(s) and hears them preach, it eventually recommends one pastoral candidate to the Council. If the Council agrees, the Council calls a special congregational meeting; this is done in coordination with the Office of the Bishop which appoints a deputy to run the meeting. Normally, the pastoral candidate leads worship and preaches at a Sunday morning worship service, which is followed by the special congregational meeting as described in the congregation's constitution. If the congregation decides to issue a call to the pastoral candidate, and the pastoral candidate accepts, then he or she becomes the next regularly-called pastor of the congregation.

### **Phase Four:**

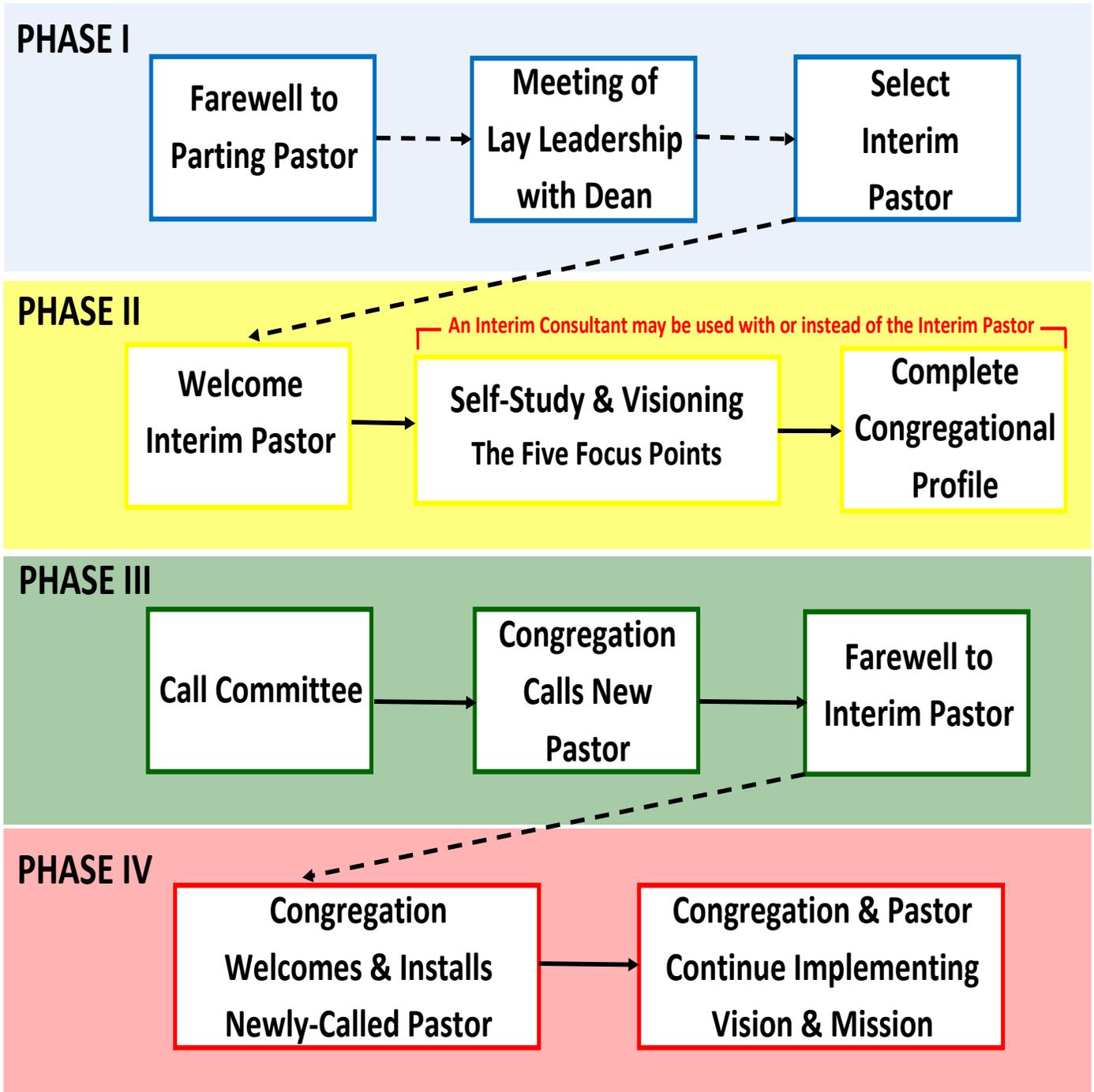
#### **Implementation with Next Pastor**

Phase Four of the interim process is the final phase. Throughout the process the congregation has worked to develop its vision of the future to which God is calling it and has called the pastor it believes will lead it in pursuing this vision. Now the congregation welcomes this new pastor. This new partnership is celebrated with a formal installation service.

Rather than set aside the work of the transition process, it is important for the pastor and congregation to work on implementation together. The arrival of the next pastor is not a time when "things return to normal," but is a continuing part of transition. Throughout the Synod and beyond there are resources for congregations as they continue to live into the future to which God is calling them.

MORE: [Proposed Implementation Format](#) Page 58

## Flowchart of the SEPA Synod Pastoral Transition Process



Dashed lines indicate where during the process it may be necessary to use a Bridge Pastor.

## *Summary of Terms Used in this Guide*

**Transitional Minister** – could be an Interim Pastor, an Interim Consultant, or a Bridge Pastor.

**Interim Pastor** – ordained pastor with specialized training in interim/transitional ministry, called to full-time or part-time ministry in the congregation in transition.

**Transition Consultant** – pastor or lay person with specialized training in interim/transitional ministry who is contracted to work part-time with a congregation and generally handles only the transition work outlined in this Guide (Phase 2).

**Bridge Pastor** – ordained pastor who takes care of regular pastoral duties in a congregation in transition while the transition work is done by others. Such situations include while a consultant leads the congregation in transition work; after the formerly called pastor has left and before an Interim Pastor is available; after the transition work is completed and the Interim Pastor has been assigned to another congregation.

**Exit Interview** – interview conducted by synod to learn more about the departing rostered leader's ministry and how the synod could be of help in the future. 1. The exit interview after the called pastor has resigned/retired is conducted by the conference dean; key participants are the departing pastor and key leaders (usually council members). 2. The exit interview at the end of the transition time is conducted by members of the SEPA Synod Transitional Ministry Development Team; participants include the Transitional Minister(s)/Consultant, members of the Transition Team, members of Council, and others.

**Transition Team** – cross-section of active members of the congregation in transition dedicated to helping the congregation explore the five focus points and complete the documentation required before the call process can proceed.

**Congregational Profile** – the entirety of documents required by SEPA Synod, in order to best match pastors seeking a call with the congregation. Included in the Congregational Profile are a position description for the next called pastor, financial and demographic information, and the Ministry Site Profile. (See page [39](#) for the full checklist.)

**Ministry Site Profile** – document required by the ELCA containing a comprehensive look at the congregation's ministry, needs, and goals; when a congregation's Ministry Site Profile is completed and the entire Congregational Profile is submitted, the SEPA Synod Office of the Bishop authorizes church-wide availability of that congregation's MSP, including on the ELCA website.

**Call Committee** – ideally cross-sectional, constitutionally-authorized group appointed to conduct mutual interviews with pastor-candidates. Normally this group is selected near the end of the transition process, when the Transition Team is close to completing its work.

**Office of the Bishop** – The Bishop of the SEPA Synod, the Bishop's staff, Conference Deans, and others who assist the Bishop in fulfilling the constitutional roles of the synodical Bishop.

**Conference Dean** – a pastor serving a congregation in the geographic conference in which the congregation in transition is located and elected by the conference to provide leadership on behalf of the SEPA Synod and the Bishop.

**Director of Interim Ministry** – Transitional Minister who is part-time staff of the Office of the Bishop; connects Transitional Ministers and Conference Deans.

**Director of Mobility** – part-time staff of the Office of the Bishop; connects rostered leaders seeking calls with the Committee of Deans and the Bishop; chairs the Committee of Deans.

**Director of Operations** – full-time staff to the Office of the Bishop; maintains the Bishop's calendar; implements the decisions of the Bishop, the Synod Council, and the Synod Assembly.

**Committee of Deans** – Conference Deans, the Director of Interim Ministry, the Director of Mobility, the Bishop, and Assistants to the Bishop meet monthly to update each other regarding important news in their conferences and the synod, and to deliberate prayerfully on which rostered leaders to recommend to the call committees of the synod's congregations in transition.

**Deputy to the Office of the Bishop** – a trained, volunteer representative of the Office of the Bishop who presides at the congregational meetings to call new rostered leaders to ensure that constitutional processes are followed.

**Rostered Leader** – Either a pastor (ordained, clergy) or deacon (consecrated, lay) who has received theological education and participated in candidacy review by lay and clergy members of a synod of the ELCA.

## *Phase One: After a Pastor Resigns*

### **1. Consultation with Synod when a Pastor Resigns**

When a pastor leaves, the congregational leadership will consult with a representative from the Synod's Office of the Bishop about how to proceed. The pastor should put the resignation with effective date in writing to the Congregation Council and copy the Bishop. In many cases, the Congregation Council may hold a special meeting with the Synod Representative.

### **2. Notifying the Congregation.**

After consultation between the congregation's lay leadership and the Synod's Office of the Bishop, the next step is to notify the congregation. Depending on the situation, there may be a letter from the pastor to the congregation and a letter from the Congregation Council. It is important to observe confidentiality so that all members of the congregation receive the same information at the same time.

MORE: [Some Thoughts on Letters](#) Page 22  
[Sample Letter to the Congregation](#) Page 23

### **3. Exit Interview**

The departing pastor, the Congregation Council, the Assistant to the Bishop, and the Conference Dean will usually attend the exit interview meeting. The focus of the meeting should be on the proclamation of the Gospel and what the pastor and congregation can learn from each other as they go their separate ways. What has the pastor/congregation done well in proclaiming the Gospel? What might the pastor/congregation do differently in the future?

MORE: [Exit Interview](#) Page 24

### **4. Farewell Celebration**

A suitable Farewell Celebration should be planned for the departing pastor. An appropriate part of the celebration is either the Farewell Litany or the Farewell and Godspeed Rite from the Pastoral Care companion volume to ELW.

MORE: [Farewell Litany](#) Page 26

### **5. Receipt Forms for Congregational Records and Financial Settlements**

At the conclusion of a pastoral ministry, the Congregational Secretary is required to certify that the congregation's records have been received in good order from the departing pastor. This requirement is specified in the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations and expected by the Office of the Bishop.

The congregation and pastor must also settle all outstanding financial matters between them. This specifically includes any vacation and/or pension matters. It also includes establishing ownership of any pastoral items that may be on church property and returning any congregational property that may be in the possession of the pastor.

MORE: [Departure Checklist](#)

Page 27

### **6. Establishing Proper Boundaries with Former Pastor**

When a pastor departs, it is the expectation of the Office of the Bishop that the pastor will sever all pastoral connections to the congregation members. Specifically, the expectation is that the pastor will not perform any baptisms, weddings, or funerals, nor will he/she make pastoral visits to those congregation members who are sick or hospitalized. If asked to do so, the pastor is expected to decline. The pastor will not take communion to any congregation members. The pastor is expected to transfer his or her church membership and that of any spouse or family members to another congregation.

The purpose of these expectations is to enable the congregation and its members to establish a normal and healthy relationship with the next pastor or pastors, including any interim pastors.

MORE: [Importance of Health Boundaries](#)

Page 18

## 7. Procedure for Selection of Interim

The SEPA Synod makes extensive use of trained specialists in interim ministry, called Interim or Transition Ministers. Individuals who have received the specialized training are called by Synod Council to serve in individual congregations as Interim Pastors. Most of them are full-time pastors, although some may be willing to serve less than full-time. Trained lay consultants who have the same training are also available.

The Synod invests time and resources in maintaining a pool of trained Interim Pastors (also referred to as Interims) for the benefit of its approximately 150 congregations. The Synod's Office of the Bishop will seek out the Interim/Transition Minister it considers most suitable for a particular congregation and who can be made available at the time. It will recommend that person to the Congregation Council for its consent. When approved, he or she will then serve as the congregation's Interim. In some cases, a Bridge Pastor will be identified to meet the pastoral needs of the congregation until a trained Interim Pastor is available or if an Interim Consultant is used.

## 8. Interim Ministry Costs

Previously, the practice of the SEPA Synod was that the starting place for developing a compensation package for an Interim Pastor/Transition Minister was the total compensation package (salary, housing, benefits, allowances, and reimbursements) of the departing pastor. Now the synod's Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Ministers applies to all interim pastors/transition ministers.

MORE: [SEPA Synod Compensation Guidelines](#) Page 36

If it becomes apparent that a congregation will not be able to afford the financial commitment needed to call another full-time pastor, the discussion about compensation should include the section of the Compensation Guidelines "Navigating Part-Time Ministry Arrangements" on pages 4-6.

Remember that the congregation's leaders will need to engage in compensation conversation with a candidate during the call process. Open, healthy

dialogue aimed at establishing fair compensation with the Interim Pastor is good practice. The combination of a congregation in transition with an Interim Pastor is a unique opportunity for ministry, and the compensation and benefit components of that relationship should be discussed with intention and forethought.

MORE: [ELCA Compensation & Benefits Form](#) Page 36  
[Guide to Completing ELCA C&B Form](#) Page 36

## 9. Letter of Agreement with Interim

The congregation, the Interim, and the Office of the Bishop will enter into an agreement for pastoral care and/or service during the transition period. The Letter of Agreement will include an opportunity for the Congregation Council to indicate the areas of ministry that it considers a high priority for the Interim. A standard part of the Interim agreement is that he or she will not be a candidate for call to the congregation.

MORE: [Sample Interim Ministry Agreement](#) Page 29  
[Sample Interim Consultant Agreement](#) Page 33  
[Why Can't We Call Our Interim Pastor?](#) Page 34

## 10. Bridge Pastor

A Bridge Pastor may be assigned by the Synod at the beginning of the transition period before a trained Interim Pastor is assigned, after the completion of the Ministry Site Profile if the Interim Pastor is needed at another congregation, or if the congregation will be working with an Interim Consultant. The role of the Bridge Pastor is to maintain basic pastoral services during the time the Call Committee is interviewing candidates until the settled pastor arrives. As with an Interim Pastor, a Bridge Pastor is typically ineligible to be a candidate for call to the congregation.

MORE: [Sample Bridge Pastor Agreement](#) Page 31

## Phase Two: Self-Study & Visioning, Congregation Profile

### 1. What is Intentional Interim Ministry?

Intentional Interim Ministry is an *intentional* process, guided by the best research available. The goal of Intentional Interim Ministry is to prepare the congregation to select the best possible pastoral candidate. The work of intentional interim ministry is based on Five Focus Points, which are generally accepted as the preferred structure for interim ministry.

However, it may be helpful to point out the two most common mistakes that are often made by congregations, as identified by extensive research:

- Beginning a pastoral search without knowing what you're looking for, and
- Reacting to the previous pastor.

MORE: [Two Most Common Mistakes](#) Page 17

### 2. The Interim Pastor Arrives

Upon arrival, the Interim Pastor should receive items needed to cover the pastoral ministry of the congregation (such as keys, directories, computer access, etc.). It is important to share information regarding upcoming Pastoral Ministry Commitments such as weddings and baptisms. During the first months the Interim Pastor will work with the congregational leadership and the congregation to explain and plan the self-study and visioning process while clarifying the role of the Interim Pastor. It may be helpful to appoint a Transition Team to help guide the process with the Interim Pastor.

MORE: [Litany of Welcome](#) Page 25  
[Role of the Interim Leader](#) Page 19

### 3. The Five Focus Points

In the larger picture, a congregation needs to take time to discern God's mission for this particular congregation. What is God calling this congregation to be or to do? In what direction should it be headed? The Five Focus Points are really a process or a road map to help a congregation determine God's mission for itself, so it can then choose the pastoral leader who is best suited to accomplish God's mission in that congregation.

The congregational leadership or the Transition Team and the Interim will work together using various tools to address the Five Focus Points. Quoting the Interim Ministry Network's latest training manual, *Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry: The Work of the Congregation*, the Five Focus Points are:

- 1) **Heritage** - reviewing how the congregation has been shaped and formed.
- 2) **Leadership** - reviewing the membership needs and its ways of organizing and developing new and effective leadership.
- 3) **Mission** - defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction.
- 4) **Connections** - discovering all the relationships a faith community builds outside of itself.
- 5) **Future** - developing congregational and pastoral profiles.

The Interim Pastor or Consultant is expected to address other tasks and issues in concert with congregation members and staff.

MORE: [The Five Focus Points](#) Page 38  
[Interim Tasks/Issues to Address](#) Page 20

### 4. The Congregational Profile

The end product of Phase Two is a package of material called the Congregational Profile. Much of the interim process for any congregation is directed toward assembling the information needed for the Congregational Profile, which should reflect the work done on the Five Focus Points. The profile is the congregation's formal notification to the Synod's Office of the Bishop that it wishes to enter the Call Process to select a new pastor.

#### *Preparation of the Congregational Profile*

There is a considerable amount of detailed work involved in the preparation of the Congregational Profile. The congregational leadership or the Transition Team may appoint an individual or small committee to work on this task. In whatever way the Council chooses to approach the Congregational Profile, the responsibility for the profile rests with the Congregation Council.

***The 75-Word "Want Ad"***

Every congregation throughout the ELCA is expected to submit a 14-page computerized Ministry Site Profile (MSP) in order to enter the Call Process for a new pastor. There is a 75-word summary in the Ministry Site Profile which is very important and is sometimes referred to as the congregation's "Want Ad." The Council should take special care in the preparation of this 75-word section, because the information in this section will become widely available by itself, without the rest of the profile. It should be complete and self-contained and suitable for wide distribution.

MORE: <a href="#">Congregational Profile Checklist</a> Page 39
<a href="#">ELCA Ministry Site Profile</a> Page 40

**5. Final Review of Congregational Profile by Office of the Bishop**

When the Council has completed work on the Congregational Profile, it submits the Profile to the Synod's Office of the Bishop. This submission constitutes a declaration by the congregation that it believes it is ready to enter the Call Process.

However, before the congregation is actually entered into the Call Process, the Office of the Bishop reviews the Congregational Profile. It must make sure that the Profile is complete and accurate. At this point, it may ask questions or offer suggestions for improving the Profile.

After any desired modifications have been made, the congregation officially enters the Call Process of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

## Phase Three: The Call Process

### 1. Selection of a Call Committee and Call Process Option

The Congregation Council is usually responsible for appointing the Call Committee. However, it is essential to check the congregation's constitution for requirements, which can vary. The Call Committee comprises the members who will interview pastoral candidates provided by the Office of the Bishop in order to make a recommendation to the Congregation Council. The Call Committee members should be installed at a worship service and the congregation should be encouraged to pray for them regularly.

The Congregation Council decides if it wants the Call Committee to receive one name at a time or a group of candidates to interview (Option A or B). If the candidate is a first call candidate, generally one name at a time is considered (Option A).

MORE: [Call Process Flowchart](#) Page 43  
[Notes on Confidentiality](#) Page 44  
[Call Process-Council's Responsibilities](#) Page 46

### 2. Call Committee Begins Meeting

As the Call Committee begins to meet, it will need to select a chairperson. It is important that the members get comfortable with one another as they gather additional materials to share with a candidate and prepare for the interview process. The Call Committee should clarify with the Congregation Council how potential expenses related to the Call Process (travel, meals, lodging) will be handled.

The Call Committee works independently of the Interim or Bridge Pastor; although, if requested, the Interim Pastor may provide guidance in matters of process. The Interim or Bridge Pastor may also provide training and role-play for a mock interview.

MORE: [Notes on Confidentiality](#) Page 44  
[Call Committee's Responsibilities](#) Page 50

### 3. The Synod Committee of Deans and Its Functions

The Synod Committee of Deans works with the Office of the Bishop to identify appropriate candidates for congregations in the Call Process using Rostered Minister Profiles (RMP) submitted by pastors. Potential candidates are given the opportunity to review the Congregational Profile before their names and profiles are presented to the Call Committee by a Conference Dean.

### 4. Interview Process

After the names of candidates are received, the Call Committee starts the interview process. All first interviews should take place within 30 days of receiving the profile. The Call Committee is expected to interview each candidate they receive.

MORE: [Interviewing Candidates](#) Page 51

### 5. Call Committee Recommendation to Council

When the Call Committee decides to recommend a candidate to the Council, it prepares a written statement of the reasons for its decision. While there are many factors which lead to the decision, the statement should articulate the most important and include how the candidate complements the mission and vision articulated in Phase Two and reflected in the Congregational Profile.

When the Congregation Council receives a recommendation from the Call Committee, the Council President contacts the Director of Operations in the Office of the Bishop who will send the materials needed to negotiate the compensation package.

### 6. Council and Candidate Interview Each Other

Before acting on the recommendation of the Call Committee, the Congregation Council will interview the candidate, which also provides the

candidate an opportunity to gain insight into the congregation. The chair of the Call Committee will introduce the recommended candidate to the Congregation Council. Only duly elected and appointed members of the Congregation Council may participate in the interview with the candidate. The Council shall use the same information provided to the Call Committee by the Office of the Bishop and the written recommendation of the Call Committee. After the Congregation Council has met with the candidate, either the Council or the candidate may meet with the Call Committee for further prayer and discussion.

MORE: [Council Interviews Candidate](#) Page 48

## 7. Preparation for Special Congregational Meeting

When the Congregational Council decides to recommend a candidate to the congregation, the Executive Committee meets with the candidate to prepare a formal Letter of Call and to finalize the compensation package. *Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor* is returned to the Office of the Bishop with at least two possible dates for a Special Congregational Meeting. Those dates must be at least 2 weeks in the future. The Director of Operations will approve the meeting date and assign a representative (deputy) to preside over the meeting.

MORE: [SEPA Synod Compensation Guidelines](#) Page 35  
[Special Congregation Meeting](#) Page 49

## 8. Council Recommendation to Congregation

Once the meeting date is confirmed in writing by the Office of the Bishop, a letter is sent to the congregation's members to announce when they and the candidate will meet for prayer and discussion and the date and time of the Special Congregational Meeting when the congregation will decide whether or not to call the candidate. This meeting must be called in accordance with the congregation's constitution, which typically requires two weeks written notice to members.

To prepare for the meeting between the candidate and congregation, Council provides the members with a written statement of the reasons for their decision and a brief biographical sketch that is prepared with the candidate's input.

## 9. The Call Meeting (Special Congregational Meeting)

The Congregational Meeting typically follows worship in which the candidate preaches and presides. If there is more than one worship service, it is suggested that a combined worship service be held. If this is not feasible, separate Congregational meetings are held and the results of the vote for each meeting shall not be released until the vote of the final meeting is counted.

The congregation and the candidate gather for worship and the candidate preaches and presides. When the worship service has concluded, the candidate shall be escorted to a place which is not immediately adjacent to the worship space. The Special Meeting is presided over by a representative of the Office of the Bishop (Deputy).

MORE: [Format for Call Meeting](#) Page 54

## 10. Conclusion of Congregation-Interim Pastor Partnership

The congregation and the Interim Pastor will begin to conclude their partnership after the new pastor has been formally selected. The date of conclusion shall be determined jointly by the congregation, Interim Pastor, and Office of the Bishop. It can be helpful if the partnership concludes between two and four weeks before the beginning of the next pastor's ministry. A farewell celebration is once again appropriate, and the Departure Checklist should be used. There may be situations in which the Interim Pastor is needed to begin ministry with another congregation before the next pastor has been called. In this case the Office of the Bishop will identify a Bridge Pastor to meet the pastoral needs of the congregation until the arrival of the next pastor.

MORE: [Farewell Litany](#) Page 26  
[Departure Checklist](#) Page 27  
[Evaluation of Interim Pastor & Process](#) Page 55

## *Phase Four: Implementation with the Next Pastor*

### **1. Welcome the Next Pastor**

There are a number of tasks to address, particularly if the new pastor is moving from a distance. The Call Committee can be helpful to the pastor (and family) as they acclimate to the community. Upon arrival the pastor should receive items needed to cover the pastoral ministry of the congregation (such as keys, directories, computer access, etc.). It is important to share information regarding upcoming pastoral ministry commitments such as weddings and baptisms. While a formal Installation Service will be held in the future, a Litany of Welcome can be used on the first Sunday.

MORE: [Litany of Welcome](#) Page 25

### **2. Arrange and Plan for Installation Service**

The newly called pastor contacts the Office of the Bishop to schedule a Service of Installation with the Bishop or an Assistant to the Bishop. A packet of materials is available to plan this service.

MORE: [Installation Service Guidelines](#) Page 57

### **3. Sharing the Work and Vision of the Transition Process with the Next Pastor**

Over the first three months, as the pastor is getting to know the congregation members, it is important for the pastor to be introduced to the work the congregation did throughout the transition period. The congregational leadership (and/or Transition Team) should schedule a series of meetings with the pastor to review the materials developed and the process experienced in Phase Two. The completed Interim Evaluation should be reviewed. The pastor is encouraged to schedule a meeting with the former Interim Pastor.

MORE: [Proposed Implementation Format](#) Page 58

### **4. Role of Former Interim**

The former Interim Pastor can be a valuable resource for the new pastor and congregation due to his/her specific knowledge and experience of the vision developed. It is, however, essential that the former Interim Pastor maintain healthy boundaries—not serving in a pastoral role, but as a consultant only at the invitation of the new pastor.

MORE: [Importance of Healthy Boundaries](#) Page 18

After an entry period of 3 to 5 months, the pastor and congregational leadership are encouraged to review where things are in relationship to the vision the congregation has articulated. What is going well? Where do energies need to be focused? What has changed? Where are there shortfalls? Using these conversations, the pastor and lay leadership can develop a specific, intentional plan to move forward with implementing the vision of the congregation.

MORE: [Proposed Implementation Format](#) Page 58

### **5. Constant Transition**

While we refer to the transition process ending, congregations are always in transition—reviewing and discerning. Throughout the Synod and beyond, there are resources for congregations as they continue to envision the future toward which God is calling them.

*Resource Documents  
for the  
Introduction*

## **Two Most Common Mistakes**

### **1. Single Most Common Mistake – Beginning a Pastoral Search Without Knowing What You're Looking For**

It may seem odd, but many congregations want to immediately begin a search for a new pastor by interviewing pastoral candidates without any real idea of what they are looking for.

The reason for this approach is emotional, which is why it is misguided. The loss of a pastor leaves members feeling that "something is missing." What is missing is – obviously – a pastor, so the emotional response is to begin immediately to look for pastoral candidates to fill the missing gap. Very little attention is paid to the grief process that may be still affecting members, to the needs of the congregation, or to what God might have in mind for the congregation.

#### **Preferred Process**

The preferred approach is to conduct a pastoral search by taking steps in a logical order:

- A. Assess and discern who you are as a congregation, including who are your neighbors.
- B. Determine a Vision for the future – What is God calling you to be or do?
- C. Decide on the pastoral characteristics that are needed to accomplish that Vision.
- D. Then, enter the Call Process to interview candidates.

### **2. Second Most Common Mistake – Reacting to the Previous Pastor**

Research indicates that a second major mistake is to be overly influenced by reactions to the previous pastor. Some congregations go looking for a new pastor who is "just like the previous one." Other congregations may go looking for a new pastor who is "exactly the opposite of the previous one." Neither approach is a good idea.

## **Importance of Healthy Boundaries**

Many congregation members do not understand how a continuing pastoral relationship with the previous pastor (either a departing regularly-called pastor or the Interim Pastor) can have a negative effect on the next pastor and the congregation's relationship with the next pastor. However, a congregation can have only one pastor at a time. When a previous pastor continues to perform pastoral functions, it interferes with the next pastor's ability to develop a pastoral relationship with members. Furthermore, any new pastor will necessarily and naturally make changes within the congregation. It may be very difficult for the previous pastor to avoid commentary by word or facial expression on the actions of a new pastor. Such commentary is interference.

In most cases, the departing pastor understands the need to relinquish any pastoral relationship with members of the congregation previously served. The church council and church leadership should assist the previous pastor and the next pastor in this transition by understanding the need for establishing and maintaining proper boundaries.

Congregation members can assist the transition by not making requests of the previous pastor that create awkward situations, such as asking the previous pastor to officiate at a baptism, wedding, or funeral. The departing pastor can help to clarify the situation by sending a letter to congregation members describing the boundaries that will be maintained.

While some may feel such boundaries are insensitive or even harsh, experience has shown that problems inevitably arise when the congregation and the former pastor continue their pastoral relationship in any way. The involvement of the former pastor after the next pastor has been called undermines and prevents the new relationship from forming. In particular, the trust that is essential to the pastor-congregation relationship cannot fully develop when the former pastor declines to give up her/his spiritual/emotional role. This, in turn, negatively affects the ability of the congregation and the next pastor to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ.

## The Role of the Interim – Best Practices of Interim Ministry

What will your Interim Pastor do?

An Interim Pastor will perform most of the usual duties of a pastor. In addition, the Interim Pastor will use his or her own procedures to address the Five Focus Points with the congregation. In general, those procedures include the following steps:

1. **Information Gathering.** Your Interim will spend some time getting to know the congregation. This familiarization may include interviewing members, reading annual reports or minutes, and obtaining demographic information about the community.
2. **Process Recommendations.** After getting to know the congregation, the Interim will recommend a process for addressing the Five Focus Points. (See page [38](#) for a discussion of the Five Focus Points). There are a number of different processes available. The Interim Leader will recommend those which seem to be the best fit for the congregation and his or her skills.
3. **Guiding the Interim Process.** The Interim will play an active role in guiding the congregation through the process, in consultation with the Congregation Council.
4. **Assistance with Congregational Profile.** The Interim will assist the leadership in the preparation of the Congregational Profile. This is the official documentation needed for entering the Call Process of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.
5. **Advice on Process Matters.** After the Congregational Profile has been submitted to the Synod's Office of the Bishop, the Interim Pastor will be available to offer advice on any matters of process or procedure as the call process moves forward. However, the Interim Pastor may not participate in or influence the selection of candidates in any way.
6. **Not Available for Call.** The Interim Pastor will not be available for call as the next regularly-called pastor. This protects the ability of the Interim Pastor to do the tasks of an Interim Pastor properly, without regard to short-range perceptions. It also protects the integrity of the Call Process. It is unfair to other candidates to be compared to an Interim Pastor who has a large advantage by virtue of being already in the congregation.
7. **Use of an Interim Consultant.** The Interim Consultant will not perform the usual duties of the pastor but will work with the transition team of the congregation to address the five focus points, prepare the Congregational Profile, and advise the Congregation Council of further transition work that could strengthen the congregation for future ministry.

## **Tasks/Issues Interim Pastors/Consultants are Expected to Address During the Transition**

SEPA Synod Interim Pastors and Consultants have developed this list as a way to explain the goals they work on in each transition situation and to show our accountability to congregations, each other, the larger church, and the pastors who precede and succeed us. Certainly, *every Interim Pastor/Consultant is trained to enter the system well and to develop trust, and to exit the system well to allow for a smooth transfer of pastoral leadership to the incoming pastor.* These tasks listed are ranked according to importance, but because every congregation has different needs, the Interim may very well find that a task listed here in the lower tier of importance needs to be given priority. The longer the Interim is at a congregation, the more of these tasks and issues are likely to be addressed. All of these tasks will be done in concert with congregation members and staff.

### **Top Tier of Importance**

- Set a tentative timeline for the process
- Lead congregational visioning
- Develop leaders and leadership practices
- Ensure outside audit is conducted
- Participate in staff reviews and personnel issues; seek balanced input from lay leaders; emphasize the importance of the adequacy of the next pastor's compensation package
- Communicate pastoral care needs and other important information to next pastor

### **Middle Tier of Importance**

- Teach about the psychodynamics within the system (boundaries, triangulation)
- Practice surfacing issues within the system (disagreeing)
- Review finance procedures (budgeting, accounting, giving, counting, endowments, trends)
- Engage more members in congregational ministry
- Check communication strategy
- Review congregational records

### **Lower Tier of Importance**

- Review policies and procedures
- Review the constitution
- Update membership roster
- Develop a short-range (3-5-years) mission plan

*Resource Documents  
for  
Phase One: After a Pastor Resigns*

### Some Thoughts on Letters

1. The pastor and the Congregation Council shall observe confidentiality about the pastor's decision to depart until the pastor informs the congregation by letter. Maintaining confidentiality allows all members to receive the same information at the same time. The pastor shall meet with the congregation's staff at the same time the pastor's letter is mailed to the congregation.
2. The pastor's letter to the congregation should include the reason(s) and other pertinent information about the decision to depart. Doing so will be very beneficial to both the congregation and the pastor as they begin to experience the dynamics of separation which will result from the ending of their relationship. However, the pastor should not be expected to discuss matters of a personal nature or disclose information pertaining to health concerns.
3. The Congregation Council may also send a letter about the pastor's decision if it feels it is necessary. However, it is recommended that such a letter be sent after the Congregation Council meets with the Conference Dean and the Director of Interim Ministry. This will allow the Congregation Council to include information about Intentional Interim Ministry and the communication with the Conference Dean and the Director of Interim Ministry.
4. The content of all communications needs to be consistent throughout the time of transition. Copies of all letters should be sent to the Office of the Bishop and the Director of Interim Ministry.
5. In the event the pastor's call is involuntarily ended, the Congregation Council, with guidance of the Bishop or Conference Dean and the Director of Interim Ministry, shall, in writing, inform the congregation and the congregation staff of pertinent information as deemed appropriate. The pastor shall not participate in the preparation of the letter.
6. The same process described in Paragraph 5 above shall be used when the congregation and the pastor end their relationship by mutual agreement. However, in this situation, the pastor shall participate in the preparation of the communication.
7. In the situations described above in Paragraphs 5 and 6, it is very important that the communication set forth the reason(s) in a manner which will help both the congregation and pastor to conclude their relationship in a Christ-like manner. Judgmental statements, allegations, differences of opinions, and blaming are not in the best interests of the congregation and the pastor and, therefore, should not be included regardless of the circumstances.

## Sample Letter to the Congregation

To Members of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church

As you know, our pastor has resigned. This raises questions about what happens next. First, we will continue all normal church services, programs, and events. If necessary, we will make arrangements for short-term pastoral services. The Synod's Office of the Bishop uses a carefully designed process to assist us in this time of transition, which is based on the most up-to-date research and techniques available. I want to share with you an outline of this process and share what this means for our life together.

**Phase One – After a Pastor Resigns.** We are in this phase right now. We are planning how to best say goodbye and celebrate our time and ministry together with Pastor [name]. We will keep you posted as plans unfold. At the same time, we are in contact with the Office of the Bishop to identify the most appropriate choice of a specially trained Intentional Interim Pastor, Consultant, Bridge Pastor, or a combination of these skilled spiritual leaders to guide us through this transition.

**Phase Two – Self-Study and Visioning Process.** In order to select our next pastor, we will work with the Interim to conduct a study of our congregation and our situation, to develop a Vision of the future mission to which God is calling this congregation, and to discern the type of pastor and the pastoral characteristics needed to lead the congregation to fulfill that Vision. Phase Two concludes with the preparation of a packet of materials, called the Congregational Profile, to be submitted to and approved by the Synod's Office of the Bishop.

**Phase Three – The Call Process.** After Phase Two is completed, the Congregation Council will appoint a Call Committee who will interview pastoral candidates and recommend a candidate to the Congregation Council. Finally, a new pastor will be called to serve our congregation through a vote of the congregation at a special meeting.

**Phase Four – Implementation.** This is when we welcome our new pastor and work toward the Vision of future ministry that we developed during this period of transition.

How long will this take? That is impossible to predict because there are so many factors at play and the Holy Spirit will be a part of the entire process. However, as soon as possible, the council will agree on an Interim. This means that from an early stage we will have a pastor (an Interim or Bridge Pastor). Generally, Phase Two takes about eight months, and the entire process may take 12 to 18 months to do properly.

We ask the congregation members to keep the Council and the Congregation in your prayers as we embark on this carefully-designed process to search for our next pastor. We are willing to answer any questions you have.

Yours in Christ,  
[Congregational President]

## Exit Interview

*This is for use at a gathering of the departing pastor, Congregation Council, and representative(s) of the Bishop. The Synodical Representative(s) will ask the following questions:*

### ***Opening Scripture and Prayer***

1. (To Council) What would be one word or phrase that would describe your pastor?
2. (To Pastor) What would be one word or phrase that would describe this congregation?
3. (To Pastor and Council) What have been the highlights of your ministry together?
4. (To Pastor and Council) Describe any low points or periods of conflict that you have faced together. What went well and/or what might have been done differently?
5. (To Pastor and Council) Is there anything in your ministry together that you wish you had done differently?
6. (To Pastor and Council) What has been your greatest learning(s)?
7. (To Pastor and Council) What do you believe are the greatest challenges facing this congregation and surrounding community as you move into the future?
8. (To Pastor and Council) What specific ministry areas need to be addressed by the leadership and Interim Pastor/Consultant during the upcoming period of transition?
9. (To Pastor and Council) You are invited to share any closing comments or expressions of gratitude with one another at this time.

### ***Closing Prayer and Sharing of the Peace***

DISTRIBUTION: Congregation / Office of the Bishop / Departing Pastor

## Litanies for Pastoral Transitions

“A church family is constantly changing. Loved ones come to the end of their lives. Individuals come and go in our church life. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings.”

Worship is at the center of a congregation’s life and so it is an appropriate time to prayerfully note the departure or arrival of a pastor in the life of the community. The Litany of Welcome and the Litany of Farewell can be adapted for the first or last Sunday of either a regularly-called pastor or an Interim Pastor.

### Litany of Welcome

*This may be used to begin the worship service on the first Sunday a new pastor begins serving a congregation. With an Interim Pastor, it helps develop a sense of continuity of pastoral leadership within the congregation. With a newly called pastor, it can provide an opportunity to welcome the pastor prior to the official installation service, which is not usually on the pastor’s first Sunday. This litany can be repeated at all services of the first weekend.*

**Leader:** A church family is constantly changing. Loved ones come to the end of their lives. Individuals come and go in our church life. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we share the time of welcome with Pastor \_\_\_\_\_, whose time as our [appropriate title] Pastor begins now. Pastor \_\_\_\_\_, in the presence of this congregation, will you commit yourself to this new trust and responsibility, and promise to discharge your duties in harmony with the constitutions of the church?

**Pastor:** I will and I ask God to help me.

**Leader:** Will you love, serve, and pray for these people of God, nourishing them with the Word and Holy Sacraments, and lead them forward during this important time of change?

**Pastor:** I will and I ask God to help me.

**Leader:** Will you lead these people of God in giving faithful witness to the Word of God and in making known the love of God through loving service among them and in this community?

**Pastor:** I will and I ask God to help me.

**Leader:** Almighty God, who has given you the will to do these things, give you the power of his Spirit so that you may perform them with strength and compassion.

**Congregation:** Amen.

**Leader:** I ask all of you, now, people of this congregation, will you receive this messenger of Christ, Pastor \_\_\_\_\_, who continues the work of bringing the Gospel of hope and salvation? Will you regard him/her as a fellow servant of Christ and work with him/her in the ministry of this congregation?

**Congregation:** We will.

**Leader:** Will you pray for him/her and honor him/her for his/her work's sake and in all things strive to live together in the peace and unity of Christ?

**Congregation:** We will.

**Leader:** By your statements of commitment and the affirmation of this congregation, we welcome you as the [appropriate title] Pastor of this congregation in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Litany of Farewell

*This may be used prior to the benediction on the last Sunday of worship when a pastor's service to a congregation comes to an end. It is important to say goodbye in a way that makes space in the life of the congregation for the next pastor. Depending on the situation, it may be appropriate to use this litany with the rite of Farewell and Godspeed (Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Pastoral Care p. 354) and to include the pastor's family in the farewell. This litany can be repeated at all services of the last weekend.*

**Leader:** A church family is constantly changing. Loved ones come to the end of their lives. Individuals come and go in our church life. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we share a time of farewell with Pastor \_\_\_\_\_, whose time as our [appropriate title] Pastor ends.

**Pastor:** I thank the congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ Church, its members and its friends, for the love, kindness, and support shown to me over these last months/years. I ask your understanding and forgiveness for mistakes I have made and for expectations unmet. I am grateful that my leadership has been accepted. With joy I recall the many things we have been able to accomplish together and with sadness the many things we were not able to accomplish together.

**Congregation:** We receive your thankfulness, and we offer our forgiveness for any failures, and our thanks for all accomplishments. We accept that you now leave us to minister elsewhere. We express our gratitude for your time among us and ask your forgiveness for our shortcomings and sometimes flagging faith. Your influence on our lives will not leave us even though you depart from us.

**Pastor:** I forgive you your failures and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God and to the Christ we are called to serve.

**Leader:** Do you the members and friends of \_\_\_\_\_ Church now release Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ from the duties of pastor?

**Congregation:** We do, with the help of God.

**Leader:** Do you offer your encouragement for Pastor \_\_\_\_\_'s continuing ministry?

**Congregation:** We do, with the help of God.

**Leader:** Do you, Pastor \_\_\_\_\_, release \_\_\_\_\_ Church from turning to you or depending upon you?

**Pastor:** I do, with the help of God.

**Leader:** Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here at \_\_\_\_\_ Church?

**Pastor:** I do, with the help of God.

**Leader:** Let us pray.

**Congregation:** God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future which rests in your care. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and our disappointments. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories but now move in new directions, until that time to come when we are completely one with you and with each other, in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

**Leader:** Go now, Pastor \_\_\_\_\_, surrounded by our love and led by the promises of God, the presence of Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Departure Checklist

Congregation Name and Address		Name	Phone	Email
		Departing Pastor		
		Council Secretary		
		Council President		

### **Pastoral Ministry Commitments**

The following commitments were made by the departing pastor, prior to his or her resignation, to provide pastoral ministry subsequent to their final day of service. All persons to whom the commitments were made have been informed by the departing pastor that the commitments listed will be fulfilled by an Interim Pastor or a Pastor designated by the Office of the Bishop.

Date	Commitment	Person(s) Involved	Contact Information

### **Administrative Matters**

The following Congregation Records and Property held by the departing pastor have been returned in good condition and vice versa (if not applicable, mark N/A next to the item):

√	Returned to the Congregation	√	Returned to the Pastor
	Congregational Records, including records of Membership, Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals are up to date		Vestments, worship supplies, communion kits
	Staff Personnel Files		Books, office materials
	Personal Computer with password and security code		Computer files
	Bank records, checkbook(s), credit card(s), retail membership card(s), petty cash and records		
	Updated signature card(s) for bank and financial accounts		
	Keys to church building(s), parsonage, vehicle(s)		
	Worship items		
	Parsonage: walk through has occurred and any concerns addressed		
	Other:		

*DEPARTURE CHECKLIST continues on next page . . .*

**Financial Obligations**

Chapter 9, Paragraph C9.08 of the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations sets forth the guidelines for the satisfactory settlement of the respective financial obligations of the congregation and departing pastor to each other. These guidelines notwithstanding, it is recommended that both the departing pastor and the congregation satisfy their respective financial obligations before the final day of the pastor's ministry.

Financial obligations to the pastor include but are not limited to payment for unused vacation and ministry related expenses. Benefits such as health insurance and pension contributions shall be paid in full as pro-rated by Portico Benefit Services, the pension/health plan of the ELCA. Outstanding loans to the pastor must also be satisfied. Likewise, if the congregation owes the pastor back compensation, an agreement should be reached to meet that obligation. In the event the congregation has provided funds to the pastor for a mortgage, arrangements shall be made prior to departure by the pastor to satisfy such debt no later than sixty days after the conclusion of the pastor's final day of service.

All financial obligations of the congregation to the pastor have been satisfied as follows:

Salary	
Housing	
Social Security Allowance	
Payment for Unused Vacation Time	
Ministry Expenses Reimbursement	
Other	
TOTAL Paid to Pastor	
ELCA Pension Contributions	
Health Insurance	
Other Benefits & Taxes	
TOTAL Benefits to be Paid	

All financial obligations of the pastor to the congregation, excluding mortgages, have been satisfied as follows:

Loans, Excluding Mortgages	
Credit Card Balances	
Other (please list)	
TOTAL Paid to Congregation	
Outstanding Mortgages Due the Congregation from the Pastor	

If mortgages or any other financial obligations are not satisfied before the pastor's departure, please describe the arrangements for repayment:

Signature of Departing Pastor

Date

Signature of Congregation Council Secretary

Date

Signature of Congregation Council President

Date

DISTRIBUTION: Congregation / Office of the Bishop / Departing Pastor

## **Sample Interim Ministry Agreement**

**among**

**[Congregation Name] Lutheran Church, [location], PA  
and  
The Reverend [name]  
and  
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

For the purpose of providing interim pastoral leadership during a period of rediscovery and adjustment to change, it is agreed that The Rev. [name] will serve as the Intentional Interim Pastor of [Congregation Name] Lutheran Church, [location], Pennsylvania, beginning [date].

The Interim Pastor will serve the congregation full time. The Interim Pastor will work approximately 40-45 hours per week, and will be preaching and leading worship every Sunday. The Interim Pastor's time commitments to the wider church (synodical events, Transitional Ministry Network Consultations, etc.) and time for Continuing Education are a part of service as Interim Pastor.

This Letter of Agreement shall remain in effect until such time as a new pastor is called by the congregation and a mutually agreed upon end date (which is no later than two weeks prior the start date of the new pastor) is set by the Interim Pastor and the Congregation Leadership (executive officers/council), or until it is terminated by mutual negotiation and agreement between the Congregation Leadership (executive officers/council), Interim Pastor, and the Office of the Bishop according to the procedure outlined in C9.05 of the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations and the prevailing policy of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod as set forth in the Policy for Compensation and Support of Pastors and Deacons in Severance Circumstances (1993) and the Protocol for the Negotiated Resignation of a Pastor Serving Under Congregational Call (2002).

### **The Interim Pastor will:**

1. Lead worship and preach
2. Administer the Sacraments
3. Provide special services (marriages, funerals, etc.)
4. Teach and/or provide leadership within the educational program of the congregation
5. Do pastoral calling in the congregation
6. Supervise paid staff
7. Be a consultant and resource to the Congregation Council, committees, organizations, and parish programs
8. Be eligible to serve as a clergy delegate to conference and Synod assemblies
9. [Other responsibilities unique to the congregation may be added here.]

**The congregational leadership and the Interim Pastor will work together to assess needs in order to address the following focus points:**

1. **Heritage** - reviewing how the congregation has been shaped and formed.
2. **Leadership** - reviewing the membership needs and its ways of organizing and developing new and effective leadership.
3. **Mission** - defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction.
4. **Connections** - discovering all the relationships a faith community builds outside of itself.
5. **Future** - developing congregational and pastoral profiles.

**The Interim Pastor will not:**

1. Work with the Call Committee of the congregation except at the request of the Office of the Bishop.
2. Under any circumstances be a candidate for Call to the congregation.

**The Congregation will:**

1. Uphold and support the ministry of the Interim Pastor with prayer.
2. Attend worship and meetings.
3. Continue financial support for the church and its mission and ministries.
4. Sustain lay leadership and shared ministry.
5. Provide financial support and time for the Interim Pastor to engage in Continuing Education opportunities.
6. Provide an evaluation of the Interim Pastor's service to the Synod office. The Synod will provide the format on which to base this evaluation.
7. Compensate the Interim Pastor as agreed to on Compensation Form.

Congregational President\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Congregational Secretary\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Synodical Representative\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Interim Pastor\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

DISTRIBUTION: Interim Pastor / Congregation / Office of the Bishop

## Sample Bridge Ministry Agreement

among

**[Congregation Name] Lutheran Church, [location], PA**  
**and**  
**The Reverend [name]**  
**and**  
**Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

The congregation recognizes that the period of interim ministry with the Interim Pastor has been accomplished and seeks to maintain basic pastoral services during the time the Call Committee is interviewing candidates until a settled pastor arrives.

The congregation wishes the Bridge Pastor to focus on the following:

1. Leading worship services
2. Attending Church Council meetings
3. Attending Worship and Music Committee meetings
4. Visiting sick, shut-ins, and prospective members
5. Conducting wedding and funerals and other pastoral acts, as needed
6. Preparing parents for the Rite of Baptism
7. Counseling congregational leadership during the call process
8. Representing congregation at Synod Assembly/Conference events
9. Although no set office hours are listed, pastor will be on call for pastoral needs
10. Other \_\_\_\_\_

The office for the pastor will be his/her residence. Time will be calculated portal to portal. The Bridge Pastor will be compensated for services provided as follows:

1. Pastoral services: \$\_\_\_\_\_per hour
2. Leading Sunday services: Standard supply rate (\$\_\_\_\_\_per Sunday)
3. Travel: \$\_\_\_\_\_per hour
4. Synod: Registration and expenses for Bishop's Convocation and Synod Assembly, if applicable. Hourly charges do not apply.
5. Vacation: The standard four-week vacation and one week continuing education will not apply.
6. Benefits: The standard health and pension benefits will not apply.

The congregation recognizes that a Bridge Pastor, like an Interim Pastor, serves at the will of the Bishop.

Services of the Bridge Pastor will begin on \_\_\_\_\_and continue until terminated with the arrival of a settled pastor or by mutual negotiation and agreement of Synod, pastor, and congregation according to the procedure outlined in C9.05 of the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations and the prevailing policy of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod as set forth in the Policy for Compensation and Support of Pastors and Deacons in Severance Circumstances (1993) and the Protocol for the Negotiated Resignation of a Pastor Serving Under Congregational Call (2002).

Should there be a delay in calling a settled pastor, this agreement can be renegotiated to provide any additional needed services.

Congregation agrees to accept the Bridge Pastor as its pastor and spiritual leader and will pray for his/her ministry.

The Bridge Pastor will report his/her activities regularly to Church Council, and Church Council will provide guidance and support for his/her ministry.

Both Bridge Pastor and Congregation understand that Synod policy discourages extending a call to the Bridge Pastor.

Congregational President \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Congregational Secretary \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Synodical Representative \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Bridge Pastor \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

DISTRIBUTION: Bridge Pastor / Congregation / Office of the Bishop

**Sample Interim Consultant Agreement**  
among  
**[Congregation Name] Lutheran Church, [location], PA**  
and  
**[Name], Interim Ministry Consultant**  
and  
**Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

The Interim Ministry Consultant will work with the congregational leadership to assess needs in the congregation, and address the following Focus Points:

1. Heritage – Explore the history and listen to stories about the congregation’s past
2. Leadership - Examine changing leadership needs, facilitate shifts in lay leadership, develop current and future leaders
3. Connection – Explore and reconnect with ELCA, ecumenical partners, and community
4. Mission– Develop and clarify mission and vision
5. Future – Focus on future needs and possibilities as the congregation prepares to call a new pastor
6. Assist with preparation and submission of Congregational Profile, including the Mission Site Profile (MSP)

The Congregation will:

1. Uphold and support the work of the Interim Ministry Consultant with prayer
2. Attend meetings and gatherings as appropriate with the Interim Ministry Consultant
3. Provide financial compensation for the Interim Ministry Consultant at a flat rate of \$35.00 per hour. No other benefits or compensations will apply.

For the purpose of providing Interim Ministry consultation during this period of Pastoral Transition, it is agreed that:

- Interim Ministry Consultant [Name] will serve to guide the congregation of [Congregation Name] Lutheran Church, [location], PA through its steps of the Focus Points.
- Interim Ministry Consultant [Name]'s time of service will begin on [Date] and end at the completion of the interim work as outlined above.
- Interim Ministry Consultant will work on an hourly basis as needed for these tasks at the rate of \$35 per hour and will submit a monthly report of hours for reimbursement.

This Letter of Agreement shall remain in effect until the interim work is completed or until it is terminated by mutual negotiation and agreement between the Congregational Leadership (Executive Officers/Council), Interim Ministry Consultant, and the Office of the Bishop. If the Interim Consultant is a rostered leader, the agreement shall be terminated according to the procedure outlined in C9.05 of the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations and the prevailing policy of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod as set forth in the Policy for Compensation and Support of Pastors and Deacons in Severance Circumstances (1993) and the Protocol for the Negotiated Resignation of a Pastor Serving Under Congregational Call (2002).

Congregation President _____	Date _____
Congregation Secretary _____	Date _____
Synodical Representative _____	Date _____
Interim Ministry Consultant _____	Date _____

DISTRIBUTION: Interim Consultant / Congregation / Office of the Bishop

## Why Can't We Call Our Interim Pastor?

*Thoughts from the article "Why shouldn't we consider our Interim Minister as a candidate for the permanent position?" (Adapted from Interim Ministry. Rhode Island Conference, U.C.C.)*

Maybe God's Spirit has someone even more suitable in mind!

The Interim has an unfair advantage over other persons who might be interested in the vacancy. This raises a question of fairness to all prospective candidates.

While the Interim may be favorable to most members, some may have developed some dislikes. This raises the concern about a built-in resistance right from the start.

If the Interim is considered alongside other candidates (Option B) and then not chosen, this could cause hurt and also a "Lame Duck" conclusion of the Interim's pastorate.

The essential tasks that need to be addressed during an interim period may not get the attention that they really need. For example, calling the Interim might interfere with doing the necessary grief work regarding the loss of the former pastor. Also, an Interim Pastor may need to do some things in the interim period that he/she would not do if anticipating the role as "settled pastor."

Such a practice could put in motion the idea that Interim Ministry is just a stepping stone in the placement process.

The Interim Pastor is a member of a network of people who have mutually agreed to this principle. To accept such a call could be perceived as the Interim going against his/her word.

## SEPA Synod Compensation Guidelines

The “SEPA Synod Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Ministers,” a manual to assist congregations in establishing a fair and equitable compensation package for pastors and deacons, may be downloaded from the SEPA Synod website. If you are unable to click on the link to the SEPA website, you may copy the following address into your web browser:

<https://ministrylink.org/resources/library/2019-compensation-guidelines-for-rostered-ministers/>

Although pastors in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) understand their work as a call from God and a mandate to serve, it is also expected to be their livelihood. While pastors in the ELCA do not expect to afford a lavish lifestyle, they are neither asked nor expected to take a vow of poverty. It should be the goal of congregations to provide compensation to their pastor commensurate to similar professionals with graduate school preparation in their community.

As pastors are expected to care for members of the church, part of the ministry of the laity includes care for the needs of the pastor who serves them. It is recommended that the Mutual Ministry Committee, or another designated group responsible for care for the congregation and the rostered leaders, make recommendations for the annual adjustment of compensation packages to the finance committee and Congregation Council.

The SEPA Synod Compensation Guidelines attempts to be a resource to assist congregations and rostered leaders in conducting an annual review and determining a compensation package; pension and other benefits; agreements relative to time off for continuing education, vacation, holidays, and sick leave; and appropriate reimbursement for professional expenses.

For tax and other purposes, it is helpful to work with each individual pastor to define compensation, which is approved by the Congregation Council before the contract period.

## ELCA Compensation Form

### Definition of Compensation

A worksheet for calculating compensation for pastors may be downloaded from the [ELCA Website](#). The worksheet is titled *Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor* and can be viewed and downloaded via this link:

[http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Compensation\\_and\\_Benefits\\_f\\_or\\_a\\_Pastor\\_Form.pdf](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Compensation_and_Benefits_f_or_a_Pastor_Form.pdf)

An accompanying document, which gives the steps to complete the form, may also be downloaded. The document is titled, *Guide for Completion of Pastor's Compensation Form* and can viewed and downloaded via this link:

[http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Compensation\\_and\\_Benefits\\_f\\_or\\_a\\_Pastor\\_Guide.pdf](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Compensation_and_Benefits_f_or_a_Pastor_Guide.pdf)

DISTRIBUTION: Interim Pastor / Congregation / Office of the Bishop

## **Pension and Benefits**

When a pastor has a change in call, Portico Benefit Services needs to be notified by your church's Portico Administrator. This can be done online through the Employer Link on the Portico website. Please share the following link with your church's Portico Administrator.  
<https://porticobenefits.org/>

DISTRIBUTION: Interim Pastor / Congregation / Portico Benefits Services

*Resource Documents*  
*for*  
*Phase Two: Self-Study & Visioning Process,*  
*Congregational Profile*

## The Five Focus Points

### Background

Research has identified five "Focus Points" that need to be addressed by all congregations in transition. The research is not unique to Lutheranism or even to Christianity. Indeed, the research has been applied to Jewish congregations going through a transition to a new rabbi. Modified versions have been applied to secular searches for new leadership. Our own Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourages its congregations to work intentionally on these Five Focus Points under the leadership of trained Interim Pastors or Consultants (Transition Ministers).

These Five Focus Points (formerly called Developmental Tasks) were developed by the Center for Congregational Health and are not new in the ELCA. Predecessor church bodies including the ALC and LCA encouraged congregations to undertake similar tasks at a time of pastoral transition, often referred to by terms such as a "Congregational Self-Study."

However, since the 1990s, the SEPA Synod has recognized the value of trained pastoral leadership for a congregation going through this process. The transitional process comes at a highly-charged emotional time for a congregation, when it is reacting to the loss of its previous pastor. It is often difficult for a congregation to accomplish such a Congregational Self-Study on its own, without an on-site leader. The Synod prefers that an on-site Transition Minister be someone who has received specialized training in the emotional dynamics and requirements of a pastoral leadership transition. A person who has completed such specialized training is called an Interim Pastor or Consultant.

### The Five Focus Points

In the latest edition (July 2013) of its training manual, *Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry: The Work of the Congregation*, the Interim Ministry Network provides the following explanation of the Five Focus Points (p. A:3).

- 1) **Heritage:** *reviewing how the congregation has been shaped and formed.*  
The congregation's heritage, both corporate and individual, is the foundation upon which the present rests. Paying attention to heritage means encouraging and hearing all of the stories about the congregation's past, and embracing the rich variety that makes up this particular congregation.
- 2) **Leadership:** *reviewing the membership needs and its ways of organizing and developing new and effective leadership.*  
Transition time provides opportunity for individuals and the congregational organizations to examine the types of leadership needed. New leaders will emerge, while some seasoned leaders may re-commit or may decide to step back or refocus their gifts.
- 3) **Mission:** *defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction.*  
The primary work in this area involves clarifying the faith community's identity and core values, working to develop mission and vision statements, and perhaps even working out short-term tactical plans.
- 4) **Connections:** *discovering all the relationships a faith community builds outside of itself.*  
Sometimes congregational life is so busy that congregations and their leadership forget to attend to their connections both to their denomination and to the network of communities around them. Transition is an appropriate time to re-assess old links and to consider new ones.
- 5) **Future:** *developing congregational and pastoral profiles.*  
Focusing on the future requires a healthy and honest assessment of the other focus points so that the congregation can turn its energy toward proactive decision-making for the future.

## Congregational Profile: Checklist and Notes

The following items should be included in the package of materials referred to as the Congregational Profile:

	Ministry Site Profile –computerized form used by all synods of the ELCA for congregations needing a pastor.
	Brief History of Congregation
	Demographic Information from MissionInsite website
	Budget and Actual Financial Figures for last year, Budget for this year
	Audit Certification by an <u>external</u> financial professional
	Mission Statement of the Congregation
	Position description for the pastor
	Most recent Annual Report of the Congregation
	Choice of Option A (One Candidate at a Time) or Option B (Multiple Candidates)

Optional:

	The Seven Reflections
	Any material produced during the transition that would be appropriate and helpful to share with candidates

It is helpful to think of the Congregational Profile as the congregation's resume. Just as most job applicants prepare a resume when they are seeking a job, so ELCA congregations prepare a Congregational Profile when they are seeking a pastor.

Before a pastoral candidate ever interviews at a particular congregation, the candidate is sent a copy of the congregation's Congregational Profile. After examining the Congregational Profile, the candidate then decides whether to allow his or her name to be sent to the Call Committee. This approach avoids the awkward situation where a Call Committee might try to interview a candidate who is not interested in a particular congregation.

It is worth remembering that an interview of a pastoral candidate is always a two-way street. The pastoral candidate is always interviewing the congregation just as much as the congregation is interviewing the candidate.

## ELCA Ministry Site Profile

The multi-page Ministry Site Profile is a major component of the package of material called the Congregational Profile, which is completed during Phase Two. An official call process form of the ELCA, the Ministry Site Profile is used by the congregation to describe its ministry and its search for a rostered leader. Congregations must fill out the entire Ministry Site Profile.

The Ministry Site Profile can be downloaded from the ELCA website by clicking on this link <http://www.elca.org/en/Call-Process/Ministry-Sites> or copying the address into your web browser. You will be prompted to create a Ministry Site Profile account. The entire process is described on the website. A sample of the form for review and study prior to downloading the official form is also available there.

The MSP contains an embedded reference form. Congregational leaders may find it helpful to print out this form and give it to the person asked to be a reference prior to the time the actual MSP is submitted. An optional form, "Seven Reflections on Ministry and Context," may also be completed to give the synod and pastor-candidates a better picture of the congregation and its particular needs.

The MSP is filled out by leaders within the congregation or organization, under the guidance of the Interim Pastor or Consultant and/or Conference Dean. Once completed and submitted, the MSP will be stored within the ELCA's Mobility Database System (MDS). The web page, "Current Openings," allows rostered leaders and others to search the database of MSPs to learn of ministry openings, to read a basic snapshot of information about each opening, and to learn about the appropriate contact person for each call process.

The Transition Team does the bulk of the work in filling out the Ministry Site Profile in many congregations; their work is always reviewed by the congregation council, and in many cases by larger groups in the congregation.

## Audit Certification Rationale

### What is an audit certification and why do we need to do one during the interim period?

SEPA Synod congregations undergoing a pastoral transition must submit an audit certification as part of their Congregational Profile before entering the call process. The audit certification ought to be completed by an outside independent auditor or Certified Public Accountant (CPA). This audit certification demonstrates that the congregation is open about the state of its finances and protects both the congregation and pastor-candidate(s).

There are three levels of services that a CPA can provide for the congregation—a compilation, a review, or an audit:

**Compilation**—the CPA looks at your financial statements and checks that the bank accounts are reconciled and that the financial statements look in order. The report will indicate that the CPA has not reviewed or audited the financial statements.

**Review**—the CPA reconciles the accounts and performs various analytical procedures to provide assurance that the financial statements can be relied upon. The CPA will make recommendations regarding procedures and financial statement presentation.

**Audit**—the CPA tests and reconciles the accounts, assesses the church's governance, related parties, conflicts of interest, and internal control procedures, and makes recommendations regarding internal controls, financial statement presentation, and governance.

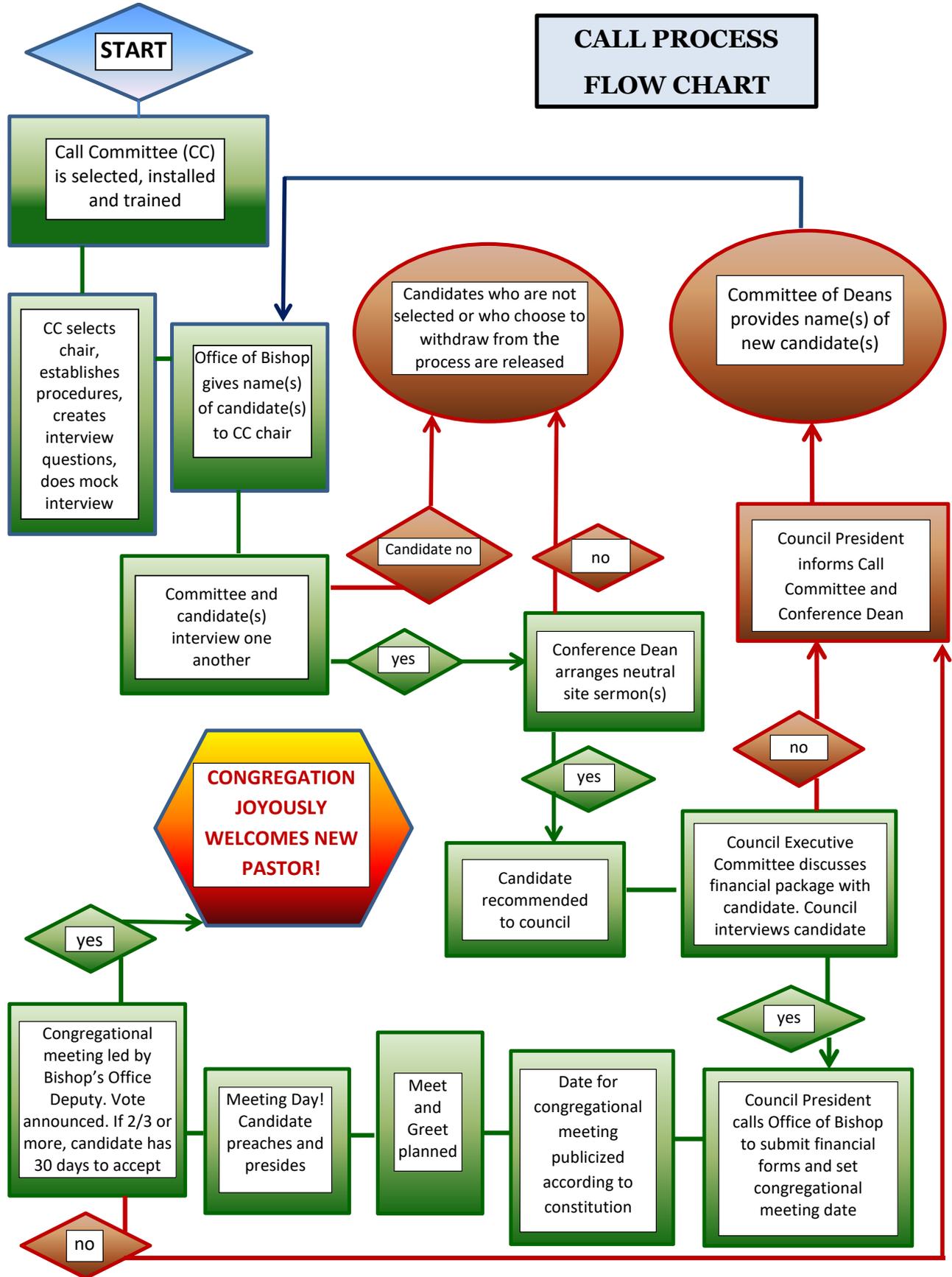
At a minimum, a review needs to be done. A compilation is not sufficient, and a full audit may not be necessary. If the congregation has had an independent audit resulting in an unqualified opinion in the past 2-3 years, a review would suffice. If not, a full audit would be in order.

A review or audit is required between pastorates as a protection for both the congregation and its next pastor:

1. The audit certification protects the in-coming pastor from being blamed for the precariousness of a congregation's financial position that already existed prior to his/her arrival. Conversely, it alerts the congregation if its once-solid financial position starts slipping during the new pastor's tenure.
2. It protects the incoming pastor from being associated with or accused of any financial improprieties that originated during the former pastor's tenure. Conversely, it alerts the congregation to any suspicious activity that might emerge after the new pastor's arrival.
3. It fosters member confidence and trust in the accuracy of the congregation's financial position, its compliance with current standards for fund accounting and reporting, and the financial oversight of its leadership. Since there is a correlation between trust and giving, a by-product of an audit certification may be an improved stewardship response from the congregation.
4. It provides recommended measures for bringing the congregation's bookkeeping, internal controls, and financial reporting into compliance with generally accepted accounting principles (a.k.a. GAAP) in the event any concerns or issues surface during the audit procedure.

*Resource Documents  
for  
Phase Three: The Call Process*

# CALL PROCESS FLOW CHART



## Notes on Confidentiality

It is of the utmost importance that the Call Committee and Congregation Council observe complete confidentiality throughout the discharge of their respective responsibilities in the call process. The reason for confidentiality is to protect the candidates, the congregations they are serving, and the congregation engaged in the call process. If a congregation currently being served by a candidate becomes aware that their pastor is seeking another call, their partnership will most likely be compromised in some way.

All candidates and congregations enter the call process with the expectation that their privacy will be respected. Such an expectation is founded on a trust which is a key element of the pastor-congregation partnership. This expectation is not unique to the Church; most persons seeking a position with a new employer do so confidentially. When confidentiality is violated, the willingness and ability of the candidates and the congregation to engage in and maintain a trusting relationship are called into question. Candidates may withdraw from the call process or the Call Committee may find it difficult to trust candidates. The Committee of Deans and the Office of the Bishop may be reluctant to allow the call process to continue until the candidates and/or the Congregation Council can ensure that full confidentiality will be observed.

Confidentiality Protocols which are to be observed are as follows:

1. **The Call Committee** will not share information about any candidate with the exception of the one they recommend to the Congregation Council.
2. **The Congregation Council** will not share information about the candidate recommended by the Call Committee until they decide to present the candidate to the congregation for consideration.
3. **The Congregation** will not seek to gain information about candidates from the Call Committee or the Congregation Council during the interview stage. When the Congregation Council recommends a candidate to the congregation for consideration for call, the congregation is asked to maintain confidentiality until after the call vote is held. This allows the candidate time to inform his/her congregation of the new call.
4. **The Interim or Bridge Pastor** will not seek or provide any information about any candidate to the Call Committee, Congregation Council, or the congregation. Typically, the Interim or Bridge Pastor does not know the identity of any candidate. However, the Interim Pastor frequently provides guidance to the Call Committee and the Congregation Council in matters of process. The Interim Pastor also may provide or arrange training for both groups.
5. **Sources of Information About Candidates and the Congregation** will be provided by the Office of the Bishop. Under no circumstances may the Call Committee, Congregation Council, or candidates seek information from any source other than the Office of the Bishop. The primary sources of information are the ELCA Mobility Forms

for Candidates Seeking A New Call and the Congregational Profile including the ELCA Ministry Site Profile (which were completed in Phase Two). Any need for additional information shall be requested from the Office of the Bishop.

6. **Violations of Confidentiality.** Any member of the Call Committee who violates confidentiality will be removed from the Committee. Any member of the Congregation Council who violates confidentiality will recuse himself/herself from further involvement in the call process. Candidates who violate confidentiality shall be removed from the call process. These steps are necessary to restore confidence in the commitment of the congregation and the candidates to confidentiality.

## **The Call Process – Congregation Council Responsibilities**

### **Selecting the Call Committee**

Typically, the Call Committee is appointed by the Congregation Council. The Call Committee is usually comprised of five to seven members that reflect the demographic makeup of the congregation. Not more than one member of the Call Committee should be a member of the Congregation Council (not the president). Be sure to check the constitution and bylaws of the congregation for any local variations.

The Call Committee should represent a cross-section of the congregation and reflect the present demographics of the community served by the congregation. It is suggested that at least one member of the Call Committee should be a person who has joined the congregation in the past four years. Ideally, there should be one teenage member on the Call Committee.

Before selecting the Call Committee members, the Congregation Council should develop and publish the agreed “Criteria for Call Committee Selection.” Each Call Committee member should meet all the criteria.

#### **Recommended Criteria for Call Committee Selection:**

1. Recognized as someone who lives the godly life revealed in Jesus Christ.
2. Committed to the mission of Christ as evidenced by regular worship and involvement in the ministries of the congregation and/or the larger church.
3. Participated fully in Phase Two of the intentional interim process and is committed to the direction set forth in Phase Two. This will ensure congruence with the information in the Congregational Profile during the call process and after the next pastor is called.
4. Demonstrated ability to work as part of a committee or team.
5. Can maintain complete confidentiality – sharing the names or data about candidates with anyone, even family members, can seriously compromise the entire process.
6. Able to make a sound judgment.
7. Has not been the source of conflict.
8. Can commit a significant amount of time and talent to the Call Process. It is recommended that members of the Call Committee temporarily relinquish their commitments to other ministries during the period when they are serving on the Call Committee.

Do not ask for volunteers, nor appoint them, unless they meet these criteria. The Congregation Council will prayerfully appoint members to the Call Committee based on these criteria.

The Call Committee must include individuals who are open to considering each candidate on his or her own merit and who will honor the expectations of the Synod and the law by avoiding any discrimination on the basis of age, disability, family profile, gender, marital status, race or sexual orientation. The Call Committee should never receive direction from the Congregation Council in a manner that would encourage prejudice for or against any category of persons. If there is any question about this, clarification should be requested from a representative of the Synod.

The Call Committee shall only consider names which have been officially provided by the Office of the Bishop. Recommendations of possible candidates should be directed to the Assistant to the Bishop for evaluation as to suitability and availability. No locally recommended person should be approached unless nominated by the Office of the Bishop. The Interim Pastor is never a candidate for call as pastor.

The names of the Call Committee members should be shared with the congregation. A Rite of Installation should be used and the Call Committee should regularly be included in the prayers of the congregation. The Call Committee will report periodically to the Congregation Council and the congregation on their activity and progress without disclosure of any names or information about candidates under consideration.

## **Selecting the Call Process Option**

The Congregation Council must choose one of the two options below for receiving names of candidates and communicate the decision to the Office of the Bishop.

Option A: The name of only one candidate at a time is provided for consideration. The candidate may interview with only one congregation. After the Call Committee completes its interviews and ministry site visits, it decides whether or not to recommend the candidate to the Congregation Council. If the candidate is not recommended, he or she is released by the Call Committee and another candidate is provided. If a candidate is released, he or she is no longer available for consideration. (If the candidate is a first call candidate, Option A is the recommended method.)

Option B: Multiple candidates are provided for consideration. Candidates are permitted to interview with multiple congregations. After the Call Committee completes its interviews and ministry site visits, it recommends one candidate to the Congregation Council. The remaining candidates are released. If no candidate is recommended, another group of candidates is provided. After candidates are released, they are no longer available for consideration.

*At this point in the process, responsibility shifts to the Call Committee before returning back to Council when the Call Committee has a candidate to recommend to Council. The Council holds the Call Committee in prayer during this time.*

## **Interview with the Candidate Recommended by the Call Committee**

### **Before the Interview**

During the Call Committee process the Congregation Council continues to pray for the Call Committee and receives periodic updates about its progress. After the Call Committee has recommended a pastoral candidate to the Congregation Council, the Council President contacts

the recommended candidate to select a date for the interview with the Congregation Council. A list of Council member names and areas of responsibilities should be sent to the candidate with a confirmation letter. In addition, the Council President contacts the Director of Operations in the Office of the Bishop, who will send the materials needed to negotiate the compensation package.

Biographical information should be distributed to council members in advance. This information must be held in strict confidence, not even shared with family members.

The Council should meet in advance of the interview to discuss the process to be used and prepare questions:

- Every aspect of the congregation's mission priorities and key aspects of the candidate's life, personal devotion, family priorities, time management, etc., should be covered by questions.
- Write open-ended questions for each area, ones that require the candidate to think then respond with what is important to the candidate.
- Questioners should be prepared with a follow-up question, searching for examples of specific results delivered, not merely glowing words and ideas.
- Each question and follow-up should be assigned to a specific person, someone with an interest or background in the area.
- Questions should be reviewed with the Synod Representative or Interim or Bridge Pastor, asking for suggestions or assistance. If possible, schedule a practice interview.

Some additional thoughts to consider:

- Invite the Call Committee to observe and listen to the process as a courtesy and knowing their deep commitment to the candidate and process. Call Committee members should not, however, participate in the interview.
- Introduce the candidate's spouse to the Council as a courtesy prior to the interview then provide hospitality for spouse during the interview
- Practice Hospitality. Be sure to set an "upbeat" and friendly tone. Name tags are helpful. Remember, you are representing your congregation's future.
- This is a mutual interview. *You are evaluating the candidate, but the candidate is also evaluating the congregation.*

### **The Interview**

Open the session with a prayer lead by a member of the Council.

Set the tone at the beginning of the interview, conveying enthusiasm about the congregation and possibilities of the candidate, and establishing a two-way dialogue.

Designate one person to take careful notes on the answers to each question. Everyone should take notes, however, to help in later discussions.

Every person should introduce himself/herself, identifying length of membership and areas of service and leadership.

Listen carefully to the candidate's answers to each question and when necessary ask a follow up question to get more specific information (e.g., examples of results).

Be sure to allow ample time for the candidate to ask questions. Allow different people to respond so that one person is not doing all the talking.

Close with prayer, possibly asking the candidate to lead it.

After closing with prayer the candidate and Call Committee members depart. The Council should immediately meet to discuss the interview and vote on making a recommendation to the congregation. The Council can meet with the Call Committee to better understand its rationale for recommending the candidate, if needed. The candidate and the Office of the Bishop should be informed of the Council decision as soon as possible.

### **Before the Special Congregational Meeting**

When the Congregation Council decides to recommend a candidate to the congregation, the Executive Committee meets with the candidate to prepare a formal Letter of Call and to finalize the compensation package. *Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor* is returned to the Office of the Bishop with possible dates for a Special Congregational Meeting. After the Bishop has reviewed the compensation package, the Director of Operations will arrange for attendance of a Bishop's representative (deputy) to conduct the meeting on one of the dates provided, if at all possible.

Once the Director of Operations has confirmed the meeting date in writing to the council president, a letter is sent to announce when the congregation and the candidate will meet for prayer and discussion, and the date and time of a Special Congregational Meeting when the congregation will decide whether or not to call the candidate. This meeting must be called in accordance with the congregation's constitution.

To prepare for the meeting between the candidate and congregation, Council provides members with a written statement of the reasons for their decision and a brief biographical sketch, prepared with the candidate's input.

The Congregational Meeting typically follows worship in which the candidate preaches and presides. If there is more than one worship service, it is suggested that a combined worship service be held. If this is not feasible, separate meetings are held and the results of the vote for each meeting shall not be released until the final vote of the Congregational Meeting is counted.

The congregation and the candidate gather for worship and the candidate preaches and presides. When the worship service has concluded, the candidate shall be escorted to a place which is not immediately adjacent to the worship space. The Meeting is then presided over by the Bishop's deputy.

## **The Call Process – Call Committee Responsibilities**

### **Before Interviewing:**

Get to really know each other; take time to share background, faith journey, church expectations, and dreams for the congregation.

Select a leader – a person good at leading a process where consensus will be important for a mixture of diverse points of view.

Agree on principles that will guide your work: openness, confidentiality, listening, commitment to the task, lack of prejudice, and support of team decisions.

**CRITICAL:** Meet with the Congregation Council or Executive Committee to receive direction on mission priorities and complete understanding of the job description and the range decided for the total compensation package. These are the bases for selecting the candidate. Agree on the process you will use, how to reach decisions, how to conduct the interviews, and the role of the alternate member(s). Schedule and invite candidates for an interview. Schedule them in close succession to keep the process flowing.

It can be helpful to send an additional packet of information to each candidate:

- Picture and brief background information of each member of Call Committee
- Pictorial Directory (if available)
- Recent annual report
- Several recent bulletins and newsletters
- Community information: local newspaper, information on cultural and recreational opportunities; things to see and do in the region

Prepare interview questions:

- It is critical that the same questions be asked of each candidate.
- Every aspect of the congregation's mission priorities and key aspects of the candidate's life, personal devotion, family priorities, time management, etc., should be covered by questions.
- Write open-ended questions for each area, ones that require the candidate to think then respond with what is important to the candidate. Focus on the past experiences of the candidate as opposed to what might happen in the future.
- The questioner should be prepared with a follow-up question, searching for examples of specific results delivered, not merely glowing words and ideas.
- Each question and follow-up should be assigned to a specific person, someone with an interest or background in the area.
- Questions should be reviewed with the Synod Representative or Interim or Bridge Pastor, asking for suggestions or assistance. If possible, schedule a practice interview.

Practice Hospitality. Remember, you are representing your congregation's future. You are evaluating the candidate, but the candidate is also evaluating you.

## **Interviewing**

**First Interview:** The Call Committee shall provide all candidates with an opportunity to meet for an interview. It is important to understand that the candidates and the Call Committee are interviewing each other. Upon completion of the first round of interviews, the Call Committee may release any candidate it has determined is not a suitable match or it may retain all candidates until the completion of a ministry site visit and/or a second interview. Candidates may withdraw from the call process at any time.

After an interview has been scheduled, the Call Committee Chairperson sends a letter confirming the details. The congregation is responsible for reimbursing the candidate for any travel costs.

### ***Sample letter:***

Dear Pastor \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to confirm our telephone agreement concerning your meeting with our Call Committee at \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church. We will be meeting at the church at [time] on [date]. We expect that our conversation will last about two hours. If you have trouble finding us, the best number to reach us at is [phone number]. [If the Candidate is located at a distance include confirmation of travel arrangements and lodging if necessary.]

I have enclosed a brief biography of each Call Committee member as well as newsletters, bulletins, an annual report, and other materials for your review. At your earliest convenience, please send us similar sample materials from your experience so we will be better prepared for the interview. If you need additional information from me, please feel free to call me at [phone number(s)].

At the interview we will be seeking dates from you to attend a service of worship at which you are the principle leader and preacher.

We pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance in our process together.

Yours in Christ,

Call Committee Chairperson

The following is an outline for a first interview, which should also include a tour of the church facilities.

- Open the session with a prayer led by a member of the Call Committee
- Set the tone at the beginning of the interview. Convey enthusiasm about the congregation and the candidate and establish a two-way dialogue.
- Designate one person to take careful notes on the answers to each question. Everyone should take notes, however, to help in later discussions.
- Every person should introduce himself/herself, identifying length of membership and areas of service and leadership.
- Listen carefully to the candidate's answers to each question and when necessary ask a follow up question to get more specific information (e.g., examples of results).
- Be sure to allow ample time for the candidate to ask questions. Allow different people to respond so that one person is not doing all the talking.
- Close with prayer, possibly asking the candidate to lead it.

**Follow-up Discussion:**

After the candidate leaves, the Call Committee should meet immediately (or very soon thereafter) to reach a consensus about the candidate. It is important to have this session and agree in writing on strengths, weaknesses, and fit, prior to interviewing another candidate.

Possible questions to help the Committee evaluate the climate of the candidate visit and responses to the questions asked:

- Does the candidate understand the mission of the church and our congregation's mission priorities?
- Does the candidate have a record of results that would be positive indicators for our mission priorities?
- Does the candidate have leadership skills to equip us to accomplish our mission?
- What are the candidate's weaknesses?

**Ministry Site Visits:** Ministry Site Visits are an integral part of the call committee's initial assessment of the candidate(s). The purpose of the Ministry Site Visit is to provide the Call Committee with an opportunity to observe a candidate presiding at worship and to hear his/her preaching during Sunday worship. The ministry site is sometimes the congregation being served by the candidate. Ministry Site Visits should occur with the knowledge of the candidate after the initial interview.

In most circumstances a **neutral ministry site** will be necessary. The ministry site visit is arranged by the Conference Dean.

1. Call Committees should be discreet when visiting a ministry site. For instance, the Call Committee should not visit as a group. Dividing the Call Committee into groups of two is recommended along with worshipping at different services or on different Sundays.
2. Only members of the Call Committee participate in the Ministry Site Visit. The Congregation Council does not visit ministry sites without the permission of the Office of the Bishop and the candidate.

**Second Interview:** If necessary, the Call Committee decides which candidate(s) should be offered a second interview and which should be released. Upon completing this round of interviews, the Call Committee must decide to recommend one candidate to the Congregation Council or to release all candidates and request another group of candidates.

As soon as the decision has been made, the Call Committee Chairperson sends a letter to any candidate no longer under consideration for a call.

***Sample Letter for Candidate no Longer under Consideration:***

Dear Pastor \_\_\_\_\_,

We sincerely appreciate your willingness to consider a call to our congregation and have been most grateful for the opportunity to meet and worship with you.

We enjoyed learning of your approach to the pastoral ministry and especially appreciate your strengths [provide one or two specific examples, such as “as a preacher and in creating imaginative programming for youths and young adults”].

However, after prayerful consideration, it is the opinion of our committee that at this time your strengths and skills do not meet the needs of our congregation. [You should mention a specific area of concern, such as “We feel we need to call a pastor who has stronger interest in handling administrative details.” or “Given our financial status, we do not feel we can meet the needs you’ve expressed for yourself and your family.” It is probably better to be candid and specific, but use care for the sensitivities of the candidate.]

Please accept our sincere thanks for your time and interest and our regret for any disappointment our decision may cause you. We will continue to keep your candidacy in strict confidence. We pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide and bless both you and us as we go forward in our ministries.

Yours in Christ,

Call Committee Chairperson

Cc: The Bishop, Southeastern PA Synod

## Format for Call Meeting

The Congregation Council President shall call the Congregational Meeting to order. Prayer should be led by the President or another Council member. Using the attendance information provided by the ushers, the President shall determine if there is a quorum according to the congregation's constitution. If a quorum is present, the meeting shall proceed; if not, the meeting shall be adjourned.

If there is a quorum, the President shall introduce and relinquish the floor to the Bishop's Representative, typically referred to as a Deputy. The Deputy shall guide the congregation through the following voting process:

- Council reports its recommendation to extend a call, and essential biographical information on the candidate.
- Discussion shall be limited. Council may entertain questions, but no other name may be considered in the voting. The sole purpose of the meeting is one of deciding whether or not to call the candidate.
- The congregation shall vote only once. There shall not be a second ballot.
- Each voting member present shall receive a slip of paper and a pen. They shall make their decision by writing either, "yes" or "no" on the paper.
- The slips will be collected by tellers who are selected in advance of the meeting by the Congregation Council (often members of counting teams). The tellers shall proceed to a place outside the worship space where they will count the votes. The count shall then be given to the Deputy who will announce the results to the congregation. At least two-thirds of the votes cast are required to call a pastor. If negative votes are cast, it is unwise to request the congregation to make the vote unanimous.
- If the congregation decides to call the candidate, the candidate is informed and brought back to the worship space. The candidate usually takes additional time to prayerfully consider the call, but may accept the call at that time. At this time, the President or another member of the Congregation Council shall offer prayer and adjourn the meeting.
- If the congregation has decided against calling the candidate, the President shall adjourn the meeting and, with the Deputy, will inform the candidate privately.
- The Deputy will inform the Office of the Bishop of the congregation's decision, including the number of affirmative and negative votes cast.

## Congregational Leadership's Evaluation of Transition Process and Interim Pastor

### **Purpose:**

- To provide an opportunity for congregational leadership to reflect on the Transition Process while preparing to implement the results of the process with the newly called pastor.
- To provide the Office of the Bishop with feedback about the Interim Pastor, the congregation, and the Transition Process.
- To bring closure to the Congregation/Interim Pastor partnership.
- To provide structure to an exit interview between the congregation leadership and the Interim Pastor.
- The evaluation of the process will be conducted by members of the SEPA Synod's Transitional Ministry Development Team (TDMT). Members of Call Committee, Transition Team, and Congregation Council are strongly encouraged to participate.

### Possible Questions for the Transition Process Evaluation

What did you discover about the congregation during the Transition Process?

What were the significant accomplishments of the congregation during the time of transition?

What were the significant shortfalls of the congregation during the time of transition?

How well did the Interim Pastor or Consultant guide the Transition Team and congregation through the Transition Process?

What would it be helpful for the Synod to know about the congregation's experiences during the Transition Process?

What recommendations do you have for other congregations facing this process?

How will your congregation support your new pastor?

*Resource Documents  
for  
Phase Four: Implementation*

## Installation Service Guidelines

The following is a sample of the letter sent to the newly called pastor to aid in planning his or her installation. It includes a helpful link to the ELCA's website:

# *From the Office of the Bishop...*

*Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Wiedemann Center, 7241 Germantown Avenue, Phila., PA 19119*

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** Rostered Ministers Preparing for Installation  
**From:** Director of Operations  
**Re:** Guidelines for Installations and Biographical Update

**Directory Update:** Complete the biographical form you received and return to the Office of Bishop

**Date for Installation:** Contact Office of the Bishop immediately to coordinate the installation date.

#### **The Service:**

- When the Bishop presides at an installation the Conference Dean is invited to act as the liturgist at the installation, which includes responsibility for the prayers during the installation rite. As soon as a date is confirmed, notify the Conference Dean.
- The lessons may be read by whomever you wish, lay or clergy.
- **The preacher should be your personal choice: (i.e. close friend, mentor, colleague, etc.)**
- Extend an invitation to the Assistants to the Bishop to attend.
- Of great help will be the direct link for the service on the ELCA's web site:  
<https://www.elca.org/Resources/Worship#Liturgy>. Select the document entitled: "Installation of a Minister of Word and Sacrament."

**Service Bulletin:** Please reproduce the entire "Service of Installation" in the bulletin so all worshippers can follow along. **When the bishop conducts the installation, send the bulletin two weeks before the service in Word format on 8 ½ x 11 paper size, not booklet, format to [ycurtis@sepa.org](mailto:ycurtis@sepa.org) and [pdavenport@sepa.org](mailto:pdavenport@sepa.org).** It is not necessary to include the hymns in this document when sending to the bishop if it delays getting the bulletin to us within the required timeframe.

**Website posting:** Please notify as soon as possible the Synod's Director of Communications, Mr. Robert Fisher (Telephone # 267-323-3743 or email: [rfisher@sepa.org](mailto:rfisher@sepa.org)) of the date, time, and location of your installation so it can be posted on the Synod's website.

**Invitations:** The Synod encourages rostered leaders to attend all installations in their conference. The Synod is not able to mail invitations for you and encourages you to do so if possible.

**Offering:** In the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, the Bishop's Discretionary Fund is the traditional receipt of the offering at an installation. **Note in the bulletin:** Today's offering will be given to the **Bishop's Discretionary Fund**, which assists pastors, deacons and their families, with help during times of distress, financial need, or medical crisis. The offering designation must be noted in the bulletin.

## A Proposed Format for Implementation

**Rationale:** To prepare the transitioning congregation for the arrival and welcoming of a new pastor, for building a healthy and productive relationship with that pastor, and for working in partnership towards the fulfillment of the vision, ministry priorities, and mutual expectations discerned and developed during the interim period.

### **STEP A Welcome and Orient the New Pastor**

1. Pray for, welcome, acclimate, and install the pastor.
2. Review the work (both the process and the results) accomplished by the congregation during transition period.
  - Share the congregation's story/journey.
  - Conduct a "live" review of the MSP with the pastor and key leaders of the congregation such as members of the Council, the Transition Team, and the Call Committee.
  - Provide an opportunity to discuss and clarify the contents to enhance understanding.
3. Provide the opportunity and means for the Interim Pastor/Consultant to share his/her work, experiences, and key findings during the transitional time.
  - Direct input from the Interim Pastor/Consultant.
  - Share quarterly reports produced during the interim period.
  - Leave a "need-to-know" and "how to" booklet/packet for the incoming pastor. Include things like passwords, council/staff member contact list, Constitution/By-Laws, Budget, etc.

### **STEP B Develop a Plan for "Year One"**

1. Plan a Council Retreat with pastor to select ministry priorities for the year and to brainstorm ideas for addressing them.
  - Consider seeking an outside facilitator so that all may fully participate without having to also run the retreat.
  - Use the MSP as the basis (don't re-invent the wheel), making sure that all are refreshed on the contents.
  - Pick 2-3 priorities as areas of focus during the first year.
    - Keep visible the remaining priorities to address in the future.
2. Share priorities with the committees/ministry teams.
  - Encourage committees/teams to do their activity and program planning for the year around the priorities.
  - Discuss and decide with the pastor the priorities he/she will focus and work on during the year.
    - Connect to and align with the pastor's ministry/position description.
    - Use the ministry priorities & mutual expectations as the foundation for regular evaluations throughout the year but at least quarterly.
3. Develop a communication plan to keep the congregation informed and to build stakeholders.
  - Leverage what may already be in place (e.g. newsletters, Temple Talks, bulletin inserts, Coffee Hour, etc.).

- Consider using “Continuing Conversations” or an Appreciative Inquiry based process to communicate the priorities and plans, to engage the congregation in the implementation, and to gather input/solicit feedback.
- Communicate/collaborate with the congregation on an ongoing basis, not just once a year.

**STEP C Implement, Review, and Revise Year One Priorities and Plan**

1. Monitor and adjust priorities and plan throughout the year via committee reviews/reports during normal monthly council meetings.
  - Ensure there are tangible things getting done versus too much time spent “conceptualizing.”
2. Continue communicating progress/achievements to the congregation.
3. Keep visible and periodically check-in on the pastor’s performance and the status of the “Mutual Expectations” from the MSP.
  - Pastor meets with Chair of Mutual Ministry and Council President or VP at least quarterly.
  - Be sure to discuss with the pastor...
    - How things are going in general.
    - If the mutual expectations are on track or need some adjusting
    - If he/she is receiving adequate and appropriate support from the lay leaders and congregation.
    - The state of the pastor’s work/life balance
    - Anything else he/she needs from the Council and congregation.

**STEP D Evaluate Year One Performance**

1. Conduct the pastor’s annual performance evaluation.
  - Should be done by the Mutual Ministry chairperson and the Council President or VP.
  - Seek balanced input from key lay leaders.
  - Assess the pastor’s work load and adjust accordingly.
  - Adjust the pastor’s compensation as appropriate and within congregation’s fiscal means.
2. Assess the status of year one priorities:
  - Check-off accomplishments and make note of those that are still a work-in-progress.
3. Review how well the congregation has supported the pastor.
  - Is the congregation’s support of the pastor on track with the promises in the Ministry Site Profile?
  - How will the congregation support the pastor in the coming year?
4. Include the assessment results in the annual report to the congregation.

**STEP E Planning and Prioritizing for Next Year**

1. Repeat steps 2-4 outlined above for years 2, 3, and beyond
  - Continually ask if the vision, mission, and ministry priorities that came out of the transitional work are still relevant and inspiring or if it is time to do a refresh.