



Southeastern Iowa Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

The Call Process

For Call Committees

Southeastern Iowa Synod Center for Ministry

2635 Northgate Dr
Iowa City, IA 52245
319-338-1273 - phone
319-351-8677- fax
www.seiasynod.org

January 2017

Table of Contents

Introduction: What is “Call?”	Page 3
Prayers of Faithfulness	Page 5
Glossary of Terms.....	Page 6
Overview of the Call Process.....	Page 7
Call Committee Job Description.....	Page 8
Preparing for Pastoral Transition	
Contact the Office of the Bishop	Page 9
Why Call Committees Work with Confidentiality?	Page 10
Preparing the Call Committee	
The Mission Site Profile (MSP)	Page 11
Summary of the Mission Site Profile	Page 14
Minimum Compensation Guidelines	Page 16
Interviewing Candidates	
Identify Potential Candidates	Page 17
Preparing the Interview	Page 18
The Interview Experience.....	Page 19
Conducting the Interview/Making a Decision	Page 20
Suggested Interview Questions	Page 21
The Council Recommendation and Election Process	Page 23
Preparing for the Congregational Meeting	Page 24
Appendix (<i>All included on the flash drive</i>)	
Roster of the Call Committee	Page 25
Installation of the Call Committee	Page 26
Nominations for Pastoral Candidates	Page 27
Call Committee Report of Interview	Page 28
Candidate’s Expenses for Reimbursement.....	Page 29
Sample Letter for Call Committee	Page 30
Evaluation of the Process	Page 31



Introduction

The Call Process is that unique and prayerful way by which the synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America engage their congregations, church-related organizations and pastors in a time of *thoughtful assessment* and *spiritual discernment* of the way God may be drawing each toward the other for mutual ministry for the sake of the mission and ministry of the church. Each of the sixty-five synods of the ELCA is responsible for the management of the call process within the territory of their respective synod.

The work of the congregational council during a call process is of vital importance. Council members should not underestimate the extent to which they provide an example for the congregation to follow. It is not unusual for some congregation members to attend less frequently during an interim period, or sit back and wait to see whether they like the new pastor. Council members – by their regular worship attendance, ongoing involvement in programs, and willingness to step up and accept additional responsibilities – will help assure other members that the congregation is in good hands, and that ministry is continuing in the interim period.

The work of a call committee that culminates in a congregational vote to call a pastor is a Holy Calling in and of itself. A call committee is entrusted with an incredibly important responsibility.

What is a Call?

In the ELCA, congregations call the pastor they wish to call, in accordance with the constitution, which states in part, “...Only a member of the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or a candidate for the roster of ordained ministers (seminary graduates) who has been recommended for the congregation by the synodical bishop, may be called as pastor of this congregation.”

While there are aspects of this task that look much like “hiring an employee,” pastors in the Church are not “hired” but “called” after prayerful deliberation. The distinction is more than simple semantics. Those called to leadership positions in the Church are gifted with a relationship with the people of God that allows them to be a part of people's lives at the most sacred and precious events of life. Lutherans understand leadership to be a call to proclaim both Law and Gospel. Leaders are called to comfort and console, support and care for God's people. They are also called to proclaim and live a corrective and challenging word from God that may at times cause discomfort. If the relationship between leader and congregation is seen simply as an employer-employee arrangement, the latter responsibility would be hard to carry out.



The Church and Call

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

The bishop represents both the interest and the commitment of the whole Church in seeing that the pastor called is suited to ministry under the call that is extended.

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

A Holy Endeavor

Since this is a holy endeavor for the sake of Christ's mission in the world, developing a consistent devotional life for your committee as you proceed can make a huge difference. You will have many "business tasks" that can distract from the One whose work is being undertaken, and the One for whom it is being done. Recalling God's great promises of the Holy Spirit's coming to you, and remembering that Christ is concerned about who shepherds God's people, can be an energizing and calming word. We invite you to make prayer and Scripture reading an integral part of each meeting and for the time between meetings.

Ask the congregation to help and support you in prayer. Include the work of the Call Committee in the prayers of the congregation in every worship service. Ask for special prayer services and vigil times to help in the process of inspiration.

Times of transition raise anxieties in the congregation. Sharing helpful, appropriate and timely information as the call process proceeds is important. Develop a plan for keeping the committee, the congregation and the bishop's representative updated on progress – an even the lack of progress. This will help ease anxieties. Most importantly, be sure you have a plan for consistent communication with candidates.



Prayers of Faithfulness

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

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

As you have raised up faithful servants of your holy word to tend your flock in every time and place, open our hearts to consider new possibilities for ministry in this community of faith.

May we be open to your grace.

Inspire us to be a people of insight, recognizing our own unique gifts and talents, yet seeking a leader who will compliment who we already are with a vision of what we are to become.

May we be open to your wisdom.

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

Lead us and guide us, gracious God.

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

Lead us and guide us, gracious God.

Fill us all with your Holy Spirit and magnify our gifts of discernment, that we might follow your will and leading into a future yet unknown.

Lead us and guide us, gracious God.

Bless the work and ministry of this call committee. Give us the gifts we need to seek and find the leader of your own nurturing, that we might grow in faith and love and ministry.

Lead us and guide us, gracious God.

All these things we ask, O God, with whatever else we need, in the name of him who is the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Glossary Of Terms

Compensation Package

The actual financial impact on the congregation's budget to support the pastor called to this position. This includes:

- Salary
- housing allowance
- pension and health benefits
- car allowance/mileage reimbursement
- continuing education
- professional expenses
- Social Security offset (if offered)

Defined Compensation

When the term *defined compensation* is used, this refers to:

- Salary
- Housing allowance (or value of parsonage)
- Social Security Offset (if provided)

The Defined Compensation and Benefits document is included in the Appendix for your use.

Ministry Site Profile (MSP)

In short, the resume of the congregation that shared congregational history, current structures and staffing patterns, hopes for future mission directions, demographic data about the community, as well as the gifts for leadership being sought by the congregation.

Letter of Call

The official letter and supporting documents extending the congregation's Call to the pastor. This form will be provided to the congregation by the Office of the Bishop when a congregational vote on issuing the Call has been scheduled.

Rostered Minister

In the ELCA, rostered minister status is granted to Ministers of Word and Sacrament (Pastors) and Ministers of Word and Service (Deacons). The call process for both rosters is basically the same. The majority of call committees are formed to call a pastor to the congregation, so this manual will often use the term "pastor" rather than "rostered minister."

Rostered Minister Profile (RMP)

The Church-word for personal resume. This electronic form, completed by the candidates, includes responses to a number of questions about theology, understandings of their gifts for ministry, personal information, employment and educational history, and references. The Office of the Bishop shares the RMP with the call committee as candidates are identified. This form is used by all rostered ministers.



Overview of The Call Process

Current Pastor Resigns

- Congregation contacts the Office of the Bishop

Congregation Council Meets with Bishop's Representative

- Interim Pastor/Process arranged

Call Committee Appointed/Installed

- Call committee trained by bishop's representative

Ministry Site Profile (MSP) Completed

- Council reviews Synod Compensation Guidelines and gives call committee parameters for financial package
- MSP approved by congregation council
- MSP shares summary with the congregation

Call Committee Submits Candidate Nominations to Bishop's Representative

- This is optional. If the call committee chooses to receive nominations from the congregation, a form is provided by the bishop's representative.

Bishop's Representative Provides Names of Candidates and their Rostered Minister Profile (RMP)

- These names are confidential
- Committee chooses to proceed with interviews
- Interview process begins

Call Committee Recommends One Candidate to the Council.

- A "Meet and Greet" event may be held.
- The council calls a congregational meeting in accordance with the constitution.

The Congregational Meeting is held.

- The candidate and the terms of compensation and benefits are provided.
- A two-thirds vote is required to issue the call.
- The candidate has 30 days to accept or return the letter of call. If the letter of call is accepted, plans are made for the transition and installation of the new pastor.



Call Committee Job Description

Participate in a “training” session with the Bishop’s representative.

At all points in the process, keep the congregation informed about progress being made.

Prepare the Ministry Site Profile, seeking assistance from the congregation council and the congregation at-large.

Seek approval of the Ministry Site Profile from the congregation council.

If desired, seek names of potential candidates from the congregation and submit those names to the office of the bishop for consideration.

Receive from the Bishop’s representative the names of candidates to be interviewed.

While maintaining strict confidentiality, prayerfully review the Rostered Minister Profile for each candidate.

Invite the candidates for an interview.

Prepare for the interviews by developing questions, scheduling the interviews, and providing hospitality.

Interview the candidates, de-brief the interviews, and decide upon a candidate, taking time for second interviews if considered necessary.

Recommend a candidate for call to the congregation council.

Assist the congregation council in planning a “meet and greet” event and provide information about the candidate to the congregation prior to the vote of the congregation.

The call committee’s responsibilities end with the installation of the new pastor.

The chair of the call committee may be asked to participate in the “New Beginnings - Walking Together” process with the new pastor, the president of the congregation and a Bishop’s representative.



Preparing for the Pastoral Transition

Contact With the Office of the Bishop

The Office of the Bishop, enlisting the resources of the synod, is committed to being as helpful as possible to you. Congregational leaders are encouraged to contact the Office of the Bishop upon the resignation of the current pastor. The bishop will assign one of the assistants to the bishop as the bishop's representative throughout the call process.

The Role of the Bishop's Representative

The assistant to the bishop who serves as the bishop's representative for the call process is your primary contact for any issues that arise for which you need assistance from the synod. There will be a great deal of telephone and/or e-mail contact between the bishop's representative and the council and call committee chairpersons.

In addition, this person will generally visit the congregation three or four times during the course of a call process:

1. To conduct an exit interview with the pastor and the council shortly after the pastor's resignation is announced. Sometimes the resigning pastor will then be excused and the meeting will continue with an overview of the entire call process, focusing particularly on the council's responsibilities.
2. To provide the council with an overview of the entire call process, focusing particularly on the council's responsibilities – if this did not occur as part of the exit interview meeting.
3. To provide the call committee a thorough overview of the process, focusing particularly on the call committee's responsibilities.
4. Upon request, to preach at least once and provide information about the call process to congregation members and to visit the congregation at other times deemed appropriate.

This bishop's representative will most likely be present in worship leadership for the installation of the person called by the congregation.



Why Do Call Committees Work with Confidentiality?

The selection of a new pastor is of interest to every member of a congregation. We hope to have deep spiritual and emotional ties with our pastor. Entrusting this to a select few is not an easy thing to do. Our feelings are compounded when the call committee must work with confidentiality, for it seems almost “secretive.”

There are two distinct parts of the call committee’s work. The first part is to describe the congregation and the leader the congregation seeks in a form called a “Ministry Site Profile.” This part of the call committee’s work should be open, transparent, and include congregational participation as much as possible. Once the call committee has completed the Ministry Site Profile, the congregational council will formally approve the form, and the call committee will share with the congregation the key pieces of information it contains.

The second part of the call committee’s work involves receiving the names of prospective candidates and interviewing them. During this second part, the call committee’s work enters a very confidential phase, where only general information can be shared with the congregation. No candidates’ names or identifying information can be shared with the congregation. There are three important reasons why call committees must work with confidentiality.

1. To Preserve the Current Ministry of the Pastor Being Considered

Call committees do not share the name of locations of pastors being considered because to do so may damage the effectiveness of the pastor’s current ministry. When a congregation hears that its pastor is interviewing for another call, members become distressed. They lose focus on their work and worry about the future. They may feel betrayed by the pastor and shut the pastor out of their hearts. They may feel pressure to make the pastor happier. The pastor can become a “lame duck.” Yet, it may be months or years before the pastor actually receives a call. By keeping confidentiality, congregations avoid damaging current ministry.

2. To Protect the Families or Friends of Pastors Being Considered

Call committees do not share the name or locations of pastors being considered, for when the word reaches their community it may disrupt the spouse’s employment and promotion, the children’s sense of security, or the friendships upon which the pastor depends.

3. To Allow the Call Committee Members to “Talk Out” the decision

In some ways, the best call committees are like a “jury room,” where each member can speak openly and freely, and the group moves toward a consensus. Remember when the disciples reported, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...”? This discussion can be short-changed if call committee members are acting “in public.”

You will help your call committee do its work by

1. Praying for the committee members daily.
2. Letting the committee members know of your support and perspectives without pressuring them for confidential information.
3. Listening carefully with your heart when the call committee presents a thorough report and recommendation at the appropriate time.



Preparing the Call Committee

The Ministry Site Profile

A time of vacancy can be a rich opportunity for reflecting on the past ministry of the congregation, and for discerning future directions for that ministry. This time is also an opportunity to determine what gifts the congregation desires in its new leader. Preparation of the Mission Site Profile gives structure to this good and holy work.

While the call committee is often responsible for completing the MSP, congregations have used visioning committees, special task forces, or the council to lead the process. Whoever is chosen, experience has taught us that involving as many members of the congregation as possible in gathering data is vital. It is a way for the congregation to have a concrete role in describing themselves and finding a new leader.

Do not be surprised if such reflection together bears surprising fruit in the congregation. New information and new ideas that begin to emerge in the process of study may cause the congregation to see their future differently, and their leadership needs in a new way.

The financial portion of the MSP is the responsibility of the congregation council. Have the council provide the call committee with clear guidelines on a total compensation package, thus setting helpful parameters for their holy search. A sample of the MSP is found in the Appendix.

Some Possibilities for Gathering Information for the Mission Site Profile:

- Whenever there is a gathering, let people know that congregation leaders are available to hear what they have to say. Encourage them to talk about what they would like to see in ministry and in the future of their church.
- Use the committee structures of ministry teams already in place as a venue for gathering information for the profile. Ask the committee/team members to set aside some time during their regular meeting to entertain appropriate questions and comments.
- Hold informal dessert and coffee gatherings in someone's home or at the church to gather thoughts and perceptions of members.
- Brainstorm together your future during Sunday forums and Bible Study gatherings.



Downloading the Form

The Ministry Site Profile is downloaded from the ELCA website. To begin, go to: <http://www.elca.org/call-process>

Steps for use of the Ministry Site Profile

1. You will be required to create an account and to give other identifying information in order to access the Ministry Site Profile.
2. The MSP is a web-based form. Save the form on your computer. Then enter information on the “saved” form. Please save your work as you proceed.
3. When the MSP is complete, click on the “Download PDF” link and save a PDF version to your computer. You can also print a copy for your records.
4. You will receive an email confirming that the MSP has been received.
5. The MSP does not become active in the system: however, until the Synodical Bishop approves the MSP and allows it to be posted.
6. You can go to “Access Account” on the website in order to monitor the status of your MSP and access the supporting forms (the Reflections and Reference forms).
7. If you wish to update your information, go to “Access Account” to edit the existing MSP and re-submit it.
8. If your ministry site has more than one opening to be filled by a rostered minister, you must complete a new MSP to reflect this second position and then submit it.
9. Tutorial Videos are available at <http://www.elca.org/Call-Process/Getting-Started/Videos>

You will need your congregation's ID number: The congregation ID number can be obtained from an ELCA Yearbook, the synod directory, or the synod office. **Our synod code is 5D: Southeastern Iowa Synod.**

Completing the Form

Item 8 on page 7 of the form asks for a Summary Description of your ministry setting and position opening in 75 words or less. This paragraph will be available on the ELCA website for all rostered ministers who are seeking information about potential calls throughout the church.

Once you have completed the Ministry Site Profile, you should provide a summary of your findings to your congregation for their informal endorsement. A suggested structure is included in this packet.

Once your congregation has endorsed the information in the Ministry Site Profile, lock the form (see page 14) and submit it to the ELCA. The synod office will receive a copy of it and this will signal that the call committee is ready to begin receiving names of



Demographic Research

To See a Demographic Report of Any Zip Code

1. Go to the ELCA's Department of Research and evaluation at <http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Research-and-Evaluation/Demographic-Reports>
2. "Click" on the menu item "Zip Code Report".
3. Enter the Zip Code you wish to have a study of.
4. Enter the Region/Synod code 5D.
5. Enter the 5-digit congregation # (*you can get this number either from the congregation's treasurer, in the synod directory, the ELCA Yearbook, or by calling the synod office*).
6. "Click" on Submit.

Optional "Second Opinion" Research Sites

1. Yahoo Real Estate <http://realestate.yahoo.com/re/neighborhood/main.html>
2. Census Reports <http://www.census.gov>

To See a Congregation's Trend Report

1. Go to the ELCA "Find a Church Page" at <http://www.elca.org/tools/FindACongregation>
2. Enter the zip code the congregation is in and "click" on "Locate Now"
3. "Click" on the congregation
4. "Click" on "Click Here for Full Report."



Congregational Mission Profile

Summary for Congregational Endorsement

Please send to the Bishop's Representative

WHERE IS GOD LEADING US?

Our current Mission or Vision (MSP #7):

Top Three Mission Priorities (MSP #7):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Our Top Five Ministry Tasks (MSP #11):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

THE PASTOR WE SEEK

Gifts for Ministry (MSP #12):

Top Priority:

-
-
-
-
-

Very Helpful:

-
-
-
-
-



Special Attention in First year (MSP #13):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Ways congregation will support & encourage in the first year (MSP #13):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Summary Description (MSP #8):

Defined Compensation: \$ to \$
Years experience:



Minimum Compensation Guidelines

The Southeastern Iowa Synod in assembly annually approves minimum compensation guidelines for rostered ministers serving in this synod. These guidelines seek to provide guidance to congregations for creating compensation and benefits packages which are in line with the packages received by other rostered ministers in the synod with similar responsibilities and years of experience. Since these guideline are considered a minimum for compensation, in most situations the bishop will not approve a call to a full-time rostered minister which do not meet the minimum guidelines for a seminary-graduate entering a first call.

These guidelines are available on the Southeastern Iowa Synod website listed under "For Congregations".

It is the responsibility of the Council to give the call committee guidance regarding the financial resources that it expects will be available for calling a new pastor.

It is also the responsibility of the council to provide the proposed compensation package to the bishop's representative for review before the congregation meets to vote on calling a new pastor.

If a council believes that the congregation does not have the resources to meet minimum compensation guidelines, it should initiate a conversation about this with the bishop's representative as early in the call process as possible.



Interviewing Candidates

Identify Potential Candidates

Once the call committee is working with names, their handling of candidates must be done in strictest confidence, for two important reasons.

First, many of the candidates are currently serving a congregation, and a breach of that confidentiality could alert the pastor's present congregation of his/her involvement in a call process – even a very exploratory involvement. This will change the dynamics of that pastor's relationship to his/her congregation.

Second, the call committee needs to be able to do their discernment without extraordinary outside pressures and influence from other congregational members, however well-intentioned this "assistance" is given.

Names of potential candidates will come to the Call Committee in three ways:

1. The bishop's representative will suggest names of rostered ministers available for call.
2. Some rostered persons may self-select and let the call committee, congregation leadership or the Office of the Bishop know they would like to be considered. Please direct any interested persons to your bishop's representative. This source is enhanced by the new process as congregational vacancies are now accessible via the internet.
3. If the call committee so chooses, they may solicit possible names from congregation members. If this is done, please insure that names are shared with only the call committee in strictest confidence. These names are given to the bishop's representative. (*A Nomination Form is provided in the Appendix*).

This is done for a number of reasons.

- First, this synod must contact the pastor's current bishop to determine if it is appropriate to contact the pastor about this opportunity.
- The synod office may then contact the candidate and find out if there is interest in being considered for the call.
- The candidate then must fill out mobility papers (approximately 18 pages) and submit them to his or her bishop.
- If the candidate is from a different synod, the bishop must approve forwarding the papers to the Southeastern Iowa Synod.
- If it appears there is potential for a good match, one of the assistants to the bishop will interview him or her.
- If all these steps occur satisfactorily, the synod office may submit the candidate's name to the congregation, within the process as described above.



Preparing for the Interview

After reviewing Rostered Minister Profiles, it is time to choose candidates to interview. While we hope that the call committee will have some sort of conversation with all names submitted, the decisions as to who the call committee actually visits with is entirely up to the call committee. The call committee might choose to arrange a conference call before holding a face-to-face interview, especially if the candidate lives far away. In recent times, video conferencing using technology such as “Skype” has been used to good effect.

Some tips for a successful “electronic” conversation:

- Use a quiet room
- Introduce everyone present
- Select one or two people to lead the questions
- Have follow-up questions ready
- Expect the call to take longer than you plan
- Leave time for the candidate to comment or ask questions

Obviously, the best way to get to know a candidate is in a face-to-face interview and in the informal gatherings when the candidate is in your midst. When a candidate is brought to your congregation, be ever vigilant about keeping this candidate’s identity confidential.

In either case, preparation for interviewing is valuable for both the committee and the candidate. Some call committees have found it helpful to conduct mock interviews with pastors to refine questions and practice their interviewing skills.

Even though congregations fall under “religious exemption” when it comes to questions asked of candidates, we ask the call committee to use good judgment and sensitivity regarding questions of age, marital status, family, etc.

Presenting scenario situations and asking how the candidate would work with the situation can give you a picture of their approach to the challenges of ministry.

When adding to an existing staff, it is wise to clarify the senior pastor’s role in the interview and discernment process. It is also wise to set up a plan for other current staff members to offer insight to the committee’s discernment process. While present staff are not the ones extending the call, their input can be very helpful for both the candidate and the congregation.

Plan to have the spouse accompany the candidate. Be sure to give the candidate plenty of opportunity to explore the community.

The first face-to-face visit is not the proper time to introduce the candidate to the congregation. Confidentiality is still important. This will also help the call committee. If the congregation meets the candidate early in the process, and members become enamored with that candidate, you will have difficulties if you as a committee end up selecting and recommending another candidate.



The Interview Experience

After you have received the name(s) of the nominee(s), gather for prayer and review the “Invitation to Call” papers together. We ask you to interview all of the pastors nominated. If you choose not to interview a pastor, you should notify us before you begin your contacts.

1. Agree upon a format for your interviews. We recommend that they be as similar as possible, for it helps you make fair comparisons and a comprehensive presentation of your congregation. Agree upon the “rules” you will have about your committee’s work, paying special attention to the final decision meeting. Review together the “Possible Interview Questions,” and formulate a list of those you plan to use.
2. Schedule and invite candidate(s) for interview. Schedule interviews in close succession, but not on the same day.
3. Candidates will have been sent a copy of the Congregational Mission Profile you submitted. We suggest that you also send a page of short paragraphs about the call committee members, picture directory and membership directory, annual report, samples of past newsletters and bulletins, schedule for the interview, and map directly to your candidates.

4. We recommend the following format for the time you spend with candidates:

- Afternoon tour of the church facility and community.
- Be mindful of the candidates need for rest before dinner and the interview.
- Dinner with some or all of the committee members
- The interview about 1 ½ hours in length
- Overnight in the community (*at a hotel, not a private residence*)
- Breakfast with call committee chairperson (and perhaps council chairperson),
- Interviews with other staff members (where appropriate),
- End of the Interview

Spouses may be invited for tours, dinner, and breakfast. Spouses should not be expected at interviews, but you may decide, upon request of the candidate, if they are welcome at the interviews. You may wish to explore opportunities for spouse’s profession, children’s needs, housing options.

Hospitality throughout the entire process is key to a positive experience for the candidate and the congregation.



Conducting the Interview

1. Plan the interview. Ask the questions you have agreed upon of all candidates (you certainly may ask additional clarifying questions). We recommend that each call committee member be assigned specific questions. Remember that this is a two-way interview: the candidate needs to ask questions about the ministry. Be prepared to offer time for this and decide how questions will be fielded. Keep interview to around 1 ½ hours in length.
2. As the interview closes, be clear with the candidate about your timeline. When do you anticipate that the candidate will be hearing from you? (It is useful to put this in writing in a “thank you” note sent soon after the interview.) Give the candidate an expense form (see Appendix) and arrange for reimbursement of expenses.
3. Call committees often choose to travel to the place of the pastor’s ministry to see the pastor lead worship and hear the pastor’s preaching. (We highly discourage a “trial sermon” in the congregation at any time.) Visit with the pastor to make arrangements for visiting, taking care to be discreet.
4. It is helpful to “debrief” each interview one at a time, rather than wait until all the interviews are completed. Evaluate the climate of the visit, and exchange personal perceptions, questions, and concerns. “Does the candidate understand the mission of the Church and our congregation’s mission goals for the future? Does the candidate have leadership skills to lead us into mission? What are the candidate’s strengths and weaknesses?”

Making a Decision

1. Wait a few days after the last “debriefing” meeting and gather to make a decision about recommending a particular pastor. Begin with scripture and prayer. Review how you will make this decision together and follow through on the process you’ve determined.
2. Contact the pastor whom you will recommend to the congregation council for call. Ask permission to make that recommendation to the council.
3. Contact the pastors whom you are not recommending by phone and report your action, thanking them for their consideration. Follow up with a letter, sending a copy to the synod office.
4. Contact the bishop’s representative about your decision. When you release a candidate’s name, fill out and send the *Call Committee Report of Interview* (see Appendix) to the bishop’s representative.
5. The entire call committee or a delegation should attend the council meeting in which you are making your recommendation. Describe the process used, keeping names of candidates not recommended confidential. Present printed and verbal descriptions of the pastor being recommended and why you are confident God is calling this person to serve here. Offer your continued assistance to the council in presenting and supporting the pastor to the congregation.
6. Once a pastor accepts the call to the congregation, send the *Evaluation of the Call Process* (see Appendix) to the bishop.



Suggested Interview Questions for Use by Call Committees and Councils

Questions believed to be helpful for enlightened decision-making include the following: (Council or Call Committee asks pastor):

- How would you describe
 - your basic work orientation,
 - your theology and view of the Bible,
 - your relationship with Jesus,
 - fundamental purpose of the church/pastor/congregation,
 - your mode of operation?
- What goals do you have for your own personal growth in ministry?
- What parts of the pastor's role do you enjoy the most?
- In what areas do you feel you are most skilled?
- How do you determine what priorities to put on tasks you must do?
- What kind of continuing education do you think is most helpful for a pastor and the congregation?
 - What was the last continuing education opportunity in which you were involved?
 - What did you learn from it?
- What do you see as the primary roles of the church council members?
- What are your views about pastoral calling?
 - On members?
 - Lapsed members?
 - Prospects?
- How do you feel about Mission Support (benevolence)?
- What are your thoughts relative to the pastor's role in the community?
- Would you care to share any of your weaknesses with us?
- What are your feelings relative to an annual review of the congregation's program, leadership, and staff?
- Do you feel planning is important?
- What are your future plans for continued personal and professional growth?
- How would you go about introducing any change that you feel is needed in the congregation?
- Without bragging, but being as honest as you can, what do you believe you have to offer to our parish that would serve us well?



- Describe your preaching style.
- Communication is an important part of parish life. What methods of communication work for you?
- Evangelism is a priority of the ELCA and this synod. If you were our pastor, how would you work with us in this community in doing outreach?
- Share an experience that challenged your thinking, inspired you, or deepened your understanding of the ministry and/or life.

Questions That May Be Asked of You as a Committee

- What is the focus of your congregation? Describe your mission.
- What is the role of staff and what is the role of the laity in your congregation?
- How many people are involved in leadership roles?
- How are lay people involved in worship?
- In your opinion, how are decisions made in your congregation?
- What long- and short-term goals has the congregation adopted?
- What is the congregation's commitment to support of and partnership with the synod and the ELCA?
- How does the congregation respond to change and how are changes made?
- What are your/the congregation's expectations about the part that family members of staff should play in the congregation?
- What would you display on a highway billboard regarding your congregation?
- Why did the previous pastor leave?
- What are some of the reasons why you are a member of this congregation and not some other one?
- If there are children, what is the school situation?
- (In case of staff ministries.) How do you describe the task divisions, lines of authority, conflict management and reporting methods for the pastoral staff, council, congregation, and committees?
- If a family visited the congregation, why do you think they might come back? Or look elsewhere for a church home?
- Complete these sentences: "I really get upset when our pastor..." "I feel really good when our pastor..."



The Council Recommendation and Election Process

1. The council provides for due constitutional notice to the congregation announcing the date of the special meeting being convened to issue a Call to a particular person. The Congregation President notifies the synod liaison concerning the date. A Call Meeting packet will be sent to the president from the Office of the Bishop. (*Note the follow page for Call Meeting specifics*)
2. The council, with the help of the call committee, prepares a communications strategy, providing thorough printed and personal announcements about the pastor being recommended, (perhaps a one or two page summary about the person and the process).
3. The council prepares a proposal for compensation, including salary, benefits, and expectations using the documents “Minimum Salary Guidelines” and “Definition of Compensation...”
4. The council, with the help of the call committee, decides upon provisions for the congregation to meet the candidate prior to the congregational meeting. The Office of the Bishop recommends an “open house” format during which the pastor might lead devotions and engage those assembled in conversation about the ministry.
5. The congregation President (or designee) conducts the call meeting. (One resolution is presented for action at the special meeting: both to issue a Call to the recommended candidate and to approve the offer of compensation.)
6. After the meeting, the congregation president (or designee) contacts the pastor-nominee and the Bishop’s representative to convey the decisions. (The call committee chair could also contact the nominee to offer encouragement and interpretation, or to offer aid in planning the potential transition.) If a Call is being extended, the president makes a plan for completion of the official call documents (and should clarify that timeline with the candidate). If a Call is not being extended, the call committee will reconvene to determine the next step in consultation with the Bishop’s representative.
7. The council president and secretary sign the completed documents and mail to the synod office for the Bishop’s signature. When the call documents are sent to the pastor, the pastor has 30 days to respond. Start-up typically begins 60-120 days from the date of acceptance. The congregation president and new pastor make arrangements for an



installation service with the Bishop's representative.

Preparing for the Congregational Meeting

As you look forward to the congregational meeting to call a new leader to serve at your congregation, please prepare carefully and note the specific requirements related to that meeting.

- ✓ You should provide the proposed compensation package to the bishop's representative prior to the call meeting for review and approval.
- ✓ Then, at the congregational meeting, the Call Committee chair, on behalf of your congregation council, should present information regarding the candidate you intend to call. This should be a description of how his or her particular gifts are likely to meet the ministry needs of the congregation, and the details about the compensation package that the congregation council recommends.
- ✓ After a time for answering any questions from people gathered, action by the congregation is required. The council president (or designee) should make a motion on behalf of the congregation council "to call name to serve as *Pastor of name* Lutheran Church at the level of compensation described and recommended by the council."
- ✓ A two-thirds (2/3) majority is needed to extend the call. Use of a written ballot is strongly encouraged and in some congregation constitutions, is required.
- ✓ The *Letter of Call* and the *Definition of Compensation, Benefits and Responsibilities of the Pastor* will be enclosed in the Call Meeting packet sent from the Office of the Bishop upon notice of the Call Meeting. Please complete and return these forms to the Office of the Bishop as soon as possible after the congregation's call meeting. Once the bishop has signed the documents, they will be forwarded to the candidate for approval and signature.
- ✓ Because many pastors choose to frame their *Letter of Call*, please take care to fill out the information in a formal manner and mail the forms in a flat envelope.
- ✓ Following the meeting, the chair of the congregation or call committee should call the candidate and share the results of the vote.



Roster of the Call Committee

The following persons were appointed to serve as the Call Committee of

Congregation	City
--------------	------

Call Committee Chairperson Information

Name

Email	Phone
-------	-------

Names of other Call Committee Members.

Send to: (Your Bishop's Representative)
Southeastern Iowa Synod
2635 Northgate Drive
Iowa City, IA 52245-9565



Installation of the Call Committee

This order follows the Creed, and the people are seated.

Pastor: The following persons, having been chosen to be the call committee, are asked to come forward as their names are read:

Pastor: St. Paul writes: There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. These are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability for some particular service to everyone. The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all.

You have been appointed to a position of leadership and trust in this congregation. You are to seek the will of God and the mind and spirit of the congregation with regard to our pastoral need.

You will examine the qualifications of prospective pastors, interview those who appear to be suitable candidates, and recommend only one person to the Congregational Council for its approval and recommendation regarding the issuance of a call by the congregation. In all your deliberations, you are to be examples of faith, active in love, seeking to maintain the life, harmony, and ministry of this congregation.

On behalf of your sisters and brothers in Christ, I now ask you: Will you accept and faithfully carry out the duties of the call committee?

Committee: We will.

(the committee faces the congregation, which stands)

Pastor: People of God, I ask you, will you support these, your brothers and sisters in Christ, in their task, and will you undergird their efforts with your prayers?

Congregation: We will.

Pastor: I now declare you installed as the call committee of this congregation. God bless you and your work together in this ministry

(The prayers and the peace follow)



Nominations for Pastoral Candidates

The call committee would welcome your suggestions of possible candidates for our next pastor. Please be aware that while the committee will take all nominations seriously, it can only talk with candidates cleared by the bishop. Candidates from other synods must receive permission from their own bishops to have their names submitted to our synod. Congregation members are asked NOT to contact potential candidates.

I would like the call committee to consider this person for our next pastor:

Name

Address

Phone

Synod

Reason for Recommending

Your Name _____

Phone Number _____

Please submit to _____ by _____
name *date*



Call Committee Report of Interview

Your response to this questionnaire is most helpful to the synod staff, particularly as we share experiences and suggestions with other call committees. Immediately after the interview, please send this form to: Southeastern Iowa Synod, 2635 Northgate Drive, Iowa City, IA 52245-9565

Pastor Interviewed _____ Date Interviewed _____

Your Congregation and City _____

List some qualities you discovered in this pastor.

Will he or she, in your opinion, meet the needs and provide the pastoral leadership for which you are looking at this time? Please comment briefly.

Where was the interview held?

Have you reimbursed the pastor for travel, food and housing expenses?

Any suggestions to pass on to other call committees?

Any suggestions for the synod office?



Candidate's Expenses for Reimbursement

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

Mileage (_____ miles) _____

Meals _____

Lodging _____

Other (specify) _____

Total \$ _____

Please attach receipts

Send to:



Sample Letters for Call Committee

Dear Pastor _____ ,

On behalf of the call committee, I want to thank you and _____(spouse's name) for visiting with us as a beginning step toward consideration of a call to _____Church. We were pleased with the openness and depth of our conversation. We felt that the evening was most productive.

If it is agreeable with you, we would like to leave your name on our call list with the understanding that we are still in the process of deciding on one primary candidate before we make our recommendation to the council. When we arrive at that point, we will be back in touch with you.

Please feel free to call me at anytime if you have questions or concerns. Again, thank you for spending time with us.

Cordially,

Call Committee Chair

cc: Bishop

Dear Pastor _____ ,

On behalf of the call committee, I want to thank you and _____(spouse's name) for visiting with us as a first step toward consideration of a call at _____Church. We appreciate your responses to our questions, and we were glad that you shared your concerns with us.

After considering the challenges and needs of _____(congregation), in light of your strengths and interests, we feel that it would be best to continue our search for a pastor in other directions.

Again, we thank you for your time and interest. Our prayers are with you in your ministry.

Cordially,

Call Committee Chair



Evaluation of the Process

Good evaluation is the foundation of a good call process. We need to draw on the experience of those who are regularly involved in call processes (i.e., Office of the Bishop) and those who are involved only once in a while (i.e., parishioners comprising a call committee). We need to develop an understanding of what's helpful and not helpful that extend beyond our personal experiences so others will benefit from our experience.

Please discuss this as call committee and council members, and forward your responses

to: Bishop Michael Burk
2635 Northgate Dr
Iowa City, IA 52245

_____	_____
Congregation	City
_____	_____
Contact Person	Contact Phone
_____	_____
Contact Email	Name of Bishop Representative

1. In what ways did the congregation find the call process helpful? Were specific parts of the process more helpful than others?
2. What parts of the process produced frustration, confusion or were not helpful? What parts of the process could be improved?
3. How did the call process help the congregation clarify mission goals?
4. What did you find helpful about the work of the bishop's representative?
5. What did you find unhelpful about the work of the bishop's representative?

