

**THE POLICY OF THE METROPOLITAN NEW YORK SYNOD**  
**ON THE TRANSITION AND CALL PROCESS**

**I. Transition**

Consistent with \*C9.06, when a vacancy in the primary pastoral call to a congregation occurs or is anticipated, a transitional pastor shall be appointed by the bishop to assist the congregation and provide basic pastoral services during the transition. Consistent with \*C9.07 a transitional pastor shall have the rights and duties of a regularly called pastor within the congregation, though they may delegate certain duties and responsibilities in consultation with the congregational council. Notification of the appointment of a transitional pastor is to be made in writing to the concerned congregation as soon as practicable following the announcement of the vacancy but no later than the departing pastor's last Sunday.

If notice of the impending vacancy is short (less than 30 days), the bishop will appoint a coverage pastor until the needs of the congregation can be discerned.

The time of transition will include a self-study process and evaluation by the congregation that will examine their strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and goals for ministry, and challenges to growth, as well as issues relevant to their situation such as: transition issues following a long term pastorate or relational conflict, changes or trends in the community or congregation, and especially the availability of financial resources to implement their vision.

Transitional ministry is described in four categories:

- A. Coverage Pastor
- B. Discernment Pastor
- C. Term-Call Pastor (candidate/non-candidate)
- D. Intentional Interim Pastor (non-candidate)

The first two categories presume less than half-time service. These ordained ministers are appointed by the bishop with the consent of the congregational council.

- A. Coverage Pastor -- These transitional pastors assist the congregation in the administration of the basic operations of the congregation, meet with the congregational council, and provide for basic pastoral care and services.  
Ordinarily these pastors will be the dean of the conference or another neighboring pastor who has received basic training in the care of congregations in transition. They will be familiar with the transition and call process and will aid the congregation in understanding the process.
- B. Discernment Pastor -- These transitional pastors cover all the duties and responsibilities of the coverage pastor along with bringing particular skills and experience in managing transitions. They may spend a greater number of contact hours with the congregation as they help the congregation clarify its needs and goals for the future of their ministry.

The third and fourth categories of transitional ministry reflect the need in some congregations for greater pastoral presence in the time of transition, whether because of on-going program or staffing needs or because of specific issues of transition which the congregation seeks to address in the transitional period. These transitional ministers are appointed by the bishop with the consent of the congregational council, but if their service is anticipated to last longer than a year, the synod council or congregation may extend a term call under †S14.18. Such term calls will generally be for 12 to 24 months or until the arrival of the newly called pastor whichever comes first. They may be renewed for an additional 12 months, if necessary. Term calls may not exceed three years. Consistent with ELCA 7.41.12, if a first-call pastor is considered for a transitional ministry term-call, the call shall be for a 3-year term.

- C. Term-Call Pastor -- The duties of these transitional pastors include those of categories A and B, but these pastors also assume a significant level of the day-to-day pastoral work that might be expected of a pastor under regular call.

The bishop may recommend for term-call a pastor who might be a suitable candidate for the regular call. If the transitional pastor is eligible for call in the congregation, when ready to consider candidates the call committee shall determine if they will recommend the term-call pastor for the

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regular call. If they agree to receive the term-call pastor as a candidate, the congregation may not entertain other candidates until they have released this pastor as a candidate.

If they decline to recommend this candidate, the congregation may ask for the appointment of another transitional pastor at the conclusion of the term.

Once the term-call pastor is no longer a candidate, the congregation may continue the call process in either the one or three candidate options.

If the term-call pastor will not be a candidate for the regular call, the source of the term-call shall be the synod council.

- D. **Intentional Interim Pastor** -- In this fourth category, the transitional pastor will provide the transitional ministry described earlier, but in these situations, they will also work with the congregation on specific issues prior to entry in the call process. Because this type of ministry requires special skills that the interim pastor receives in specific training provided by the ELCA, it is not appropriate that these transitional ministers entertain candidacy in the congregations they serve so that, once their tasks in a given congregation are complete, they can bring their particular skills to other places of need within the church. As the Intentional Interim pastor cannot be a candidate for the regular call, the source of interim call shall be the synod council.

In all cases, the congregation will pay a stipend to the transitional minister commensurate with the duties and hours required. For service half-time or more, a housing allowance or use of the parsonage should be included in the stipend. Pension and health benefits shall be negotiated under guidelines provided by the Board of Pensions.

#### **Associate/Assistant Pastors and other Rostered Leaders**

It is expected that the calls of associate and assistant pastors are coterminous with the call of the primary pastor. The effective date of the resignation of associate or assistant pastors on staff shall be set in consultation with the bishop and the congregation council but should be before the arrival of the new pastor. Consistent with \*C9.09, this restriction shall be incorporated into the letter of call before it is submitted to the bishop for attestation.

This same principle may be applied to the calls of other rostered leaders, depending on the nature of their position and their duties described in their Letter of Call. Exceptions shall be at the discretion of the bishop.

The portion of this policy regarding the appointment of transitional ministers is not applicable to the position of an assistant or associate pastor. The bishop will consult with congregations with regard to their needs during vacancies in secondary staff ministries.

#### **II. Call Process**

Before a transitional ministry begins, the synod will provide for an exit interview with both the pastor who is leaving and the congregation council (or leadership) so that appropriate decisions about the level of transitional ministry needed may be made.

The congregation will conduct a self-study. Using materials provided by the synod they will assess the needs and goals of the congregation and prepare the congregational profile using the forms and guidelines provided through the ELCA. The congregation will also determine the resources available to fund the pastoral compensation package and disclose this information to the synod.

Following the self-study, the congregation will appoint or elect a call committee in a manner consistent with the constitution and bylaws of the congregation [c.f. C13.05.].

The call committee will participate in at least one call committee training session. The call committee then decides, after appropriate consultation with congregation leadership, how to proceed in the process of interviewing candidates for the call to the congregation. Two options will be available.

**One candidate at a time.** In this option, the call committee will have exclusive interview privileges with the recommended candidate for the first interview and an opportunity to hear the candidate preach and

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conduct worship. The period of exclusivity shall last for thirty days following the initial interview, after which the candidate may entertain interviews with other congregations.

Congregational settings appropriate for “first call” candidates will operate under the “one-candidate-at-a-time” option.

**Up to three candidates at a time.** In this option, the congregation may interview and hear up to three candidates before making any recommendation to call a candidate. Candidates considered under this option may interview in several ministry settings concurrently. When a call committee has voted to recommend a candidate to the congregation, the other candidates will be released and may not be considered further. Candidates who are recommended for call must notify all other interviewing congregations that a call vote is pending or must withdraw from the call process where they have been recommended. Both candidates and congregations should notify their counterparts at the earliest opportunity if it becomes clear that they are no longer interested in pursuing the call.

These procedures for calling ministers may be used as deemed appropriate for the calling of assistant or associate pastors and other rostered laypersons to staff positions in congregational settings.

**Pastors.** Ordained ministers seeking call shall prepare profile documents provided by the ELCA. When their names are to be submitted to a congregation, they shall be informed as to the interview process being used (one or three candidates). Ordained ministers may request that they be considered only under the one candidate option. Pastors shall make their minimum salary needs known to the synod.