

A Guide for Call Process

updated December 2015



Metropolitan New York Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

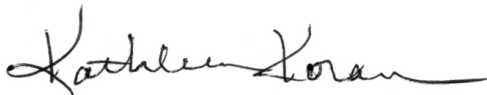
A Guide for Call Process

A change of pastor is a significant transition in the life of a congregation. This brief guide draws on the policy and procedures of the Metropolitan New York Synod and the experiences of our pastors, Congregation Councils, and call committees in recent years.

Resources from other synods of the ELCA are also gathered here, providing additional assistance for congregations. Because congregation transitions are also synodical transitions, the synod staff is ready to assist, and partners with congregations during a time of transition.

We pray for you and your congregation always, but especially in the important time of a change of pastor. May you be held close to God's heart and enlivened by the breath of the Holy Spirit, that the Good News of Jesus Christ continues to be proclaimed and lived in our synod.

In Jesus' name,



Pastor Kathleen R. Koran
Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations
edited December 2015

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God, You who are the Alpha and Omega, we pray to you for this congregation as we seek to discern your will for us. Grant our leaders wisdom in the responsibilities that they assume. Help us to identify and do the things that most need to be done. Guide the call committee in their deliberations; give them wisdom in the questions they ask and the choices they make. Guide us all that we each may take our part and none be overburdened. Keep us strong as your people in this time of change, keep us focused on the mission and ministry you have called us to and entrusted us with. We pray in, with, and through the grace of Jesus Christ. Amen.

- Sacred Journey, 2008

Call Process – A Brief Outline

I. Departing Pastor

Notify the bishop's office, *in writing*, a minimum of 30 days prior to the date of departure. A meeting with the bishop prior to notification is highly recommended. This letter to the Bishop should specify the pastor's last day of service, and last Sunday to lead worship. Accrued vacation time should be specified and noted, if part of the transition time.

It is preferable to notify officers and congregation council in person. Next, notify congregation, by letter to all members and significant partners in ministry, a minimum of 30 days prior to the date of departure.

With the dean or other designated leader/s, complete¹

- [Exit Interview for Pastors](#)
- [Transition Administration Information](#)
- [Attestation of Record and Financial Requirements](#)
- [Covenant of Agreement for Departing Pastors](#)
- [Letter to Congregation Concerning Covenant for Departing Pastors.](#)

II. Congregation President

With the conference dean or other designated person, lead the Congregation Council in completing the [Exit Interview for Congregations](#).

Arrange for publication of [Letter to Congregation Concerning Covenant for Departing Pastors](#) in the Sunday bulletin and congregation newsletter. The letter may also be mailed to all members.

With the council, arrange rite of Farewell and Godspeed² for the pastor's last Sunday.

Consult with synod staff and conference dean on appointment of transition pastor.³

In consultation with conference dean or transition pastor, arrange for supply pastors.

Consult with Portico Benefit Services to file appropriate "Change of Call" documents.

¹ All forms are available on our synod website, www.mnys.org/forms/

² Evangelical Lutheran Worship's [Occasional Services for the Assembly](#) includes a rite for "Thanksgiving at the Conclusion of a Call."

³ See Policy of MNYS on types of transition ministry.

III. Congregation Council

In partnership with the transition pastor and dean, lead in the congregation in completing the transition tasks specified in the [Policy of the Metropolitan New York Synod on the Transition and Call Process](#), section II, Call Process.

In partnership with the transition pastor and dean, lead the congregation in completing the [Ministry Site Profile](#).

Form a Call committee

- Consult the congregation's constitution for guidelines in forming the call committee.
- Review "Called to Be Among Us" for guidance in selecting call committee members.
- Deacons, staff, employees and others who are under the pastor's formal supervision may not serve on the Call Committee.
- The President of the Congregation Council may not serve on the Call committee. One member of the council may serve, but not as the chair.

[Schedule a commissioning/installation of the call committee](#) for a regular worship service of the congregation. Include the call committee in the regular prayers of the congregation.

Budget for expenses related to the call process, including travel and lodging for potential candidates and moving expenses for a newly called pastor.

IV. Call Committee

Schedule call committee training with synod staff or other designated leader. The document "Called to Be Among Us" will provide the outline for this training.

Prepare for interviewing.

Suggest candidate names to the bishop's office.

Receive nominations from the bishop's office.

Conduct interview(s) and background checks, hear candidate(s) preach, recommend a single candidate to the Congregation Council.

In consultation with designated congregation leaders, using our synod [Compensation Guidelines](#), prepare the form [Definition of Compensation, Benefits and Responsibilities](#).

Designated leaders meet with the candidate to discuss and negotiate, if needed, the compensation, benefits, and responsibilities/mutual ministry package. Consult with

designated synod staff as needed. **Forward compensation package to the bishop's office for approval.**

Recommend the candidate to the Congregation Council.

V. Congregation Council

Receive recommendation of the call committee, the mutual ministry covenant, and compensation package.

Schedule time to meet informally with the candidate. (This may be at the same meeting at which the recommendation of the call committee is received.)

Vote to recommend the candidate to the congregation.

President (or vice president where the pastor is the president), in consultation with the candidate and the synod office, sets a date for the Call Sunday, giving appropriate advance notification to the congregation as specified in the congregation's constitution. The bishop's office will appoint a synodical representative to conduct the call meeting, and provide instructions to the Council president/vice president for preparing for the meeting.

Schedule, if desired, an open house or potluck for the day before the congregational meeting, providing an opportunity for the congregation to meet the candidate and candidate's family.

Essentials of a Call Meeting

Congregation Council President...	receives a call meeting packet from the bishop's office, and researches the constitution of the congregation regarding the requirements for a quorum and voting membership. <u>New York State Religious Corporation Law provides that if the constitution of the congregation does not specify an age, the voting age shall be 21.</u>
Candidate...	preaches and, if ordained, or licensed by the bishop, presides. <u>If you typically have more than one worship service that day, combine them into one if at all possible.</u>
Congregation President	convenes the call meeting following worship, introducing the Synod Representative who will conduct the meeting. The candidate may make a statement before leaving the sanctuary so that the voting may take place.
Congregation Council...	provides the congregation with a description of candidate, the mutual ministry covenant, and compensation package. These are the only items to be voted upon.
Voters...	sign in and must be members in good standing. Vote by written ballot—yea or nay—no abstentions. Absentee ballots are not permitted.
Counters...	chosen prior to the meeting, collect and count the ballots. A 2/3 majority is needed to call. Results are announced to the congregation.
Candidate...	returns to gathered assembly—to acclamation, one hopes!

If the vote is affirmative, congregation officers prepare the Letter of Call received from the bishop's office and return it to bishop for attestation. The bishop signs and forwards the attested call to the pastor-elect. Constitutionally, candidate has 30 days to accept or decline the call.

The candidate writes a letter of acceptance or decline to the council president—and sends a copy to the bishop. A letter of acceptance must include the start-up date.

If declined, the process begins again with a new nomination.

If accepted, plans for this new partnership in ministry begin!

Pray. Get to know one another. Listen to one another. Laugh together. Celebrate.

Sample Letter of Notification to Congregation of Call Meeting

Date of Letter _____

NOTICE OF SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Date: _____

Time: Immediately following _____ worship service

Note there is only one service for this Sunday; service to be led by and sermon given by pastoral candidate

Purpose: To hold election for the next pastor of _____ Church

Vote by written ballot to be presided over by representative of the bishop; two-thirds majority vote required for election; vote on candidate and compensation package only

Background

Your Congregation Council, at a specially called council meeting on _____, reviewed and approved the call committee's recommendations:

- a. to nominate, for the congregation's approval, a pastoral candidate they had extensively interviewed, heard preach at a neighboring congregation, and unanimously recommended;
- b. to seek the congregation's approval of the agreed-upon compensation and benefits package for the pastoral candidate; and
- c. to call a special meeting of the congregation for the sole purpose of electing the pastoral candidate and approving the recommended compensation and benefits package.

The bishop's office was advised of these actions whereupon the bishop's office selected a representative to attend the Special Congregational Meeting on _____ and to preside over the election of the pastoral candidate. A two-thirds majority vote, by written ballot, is required by the attendees at the specially-called meeting to elect the pastoral candidate and to approve the recommended _____ (year) compensation and benefits package.

There will be a single vote on the election of the pastor and the compensation package—no other business will be conducted at the meeting.

Information Concerning the Pastoral Candidate’s Identity

To retain the confidentiality of the recommended pastor’s identity within that pastor’s current congregation, synod protocols do not permit the Congregation Council to reveal the identity of the nominated pastor until the weekend of the Special Congregational Meeting. **The congregation will have the opportunity to meet the nominated pastor and the pastor’s spouse at a special social function to be held (give time, place, and date). Then on _____, the nominated pastoral candidate will lead the worship service (one service beginning at _____) and deliver the sermon to our congregation. Immediately following the service, the Special Congregational Meeting will begin and the vote to elect the nominated candidate will be held at that meeting.**

General Information About the Pastoral Candidate

(The following is a sample which will need to be changed to fit the description of your candidate).

A general description of the nominated candidate to become _____ next pastor follows:

- Experienced ELCA minister with _____ years pastoral experience;
- Has led current congregation in Tri-State area for _____;
- Experienced youth minister who has attended numerous National Youth Gatherings as counselor/pastor and who considers youth to be high on the ministerial priority list;
- Works closely with elementary, middle school and high school youth;
- Seeks to unite and include “all ages” in fellowship and mission;
- Has led and participated in men’s Bible study and women’s Bible study groups;
- Considers Sacrament of Holy Baptism as central to personal sense of call and theology.

Then a closing paragraph repeating the invitation.

Yours in Christ,

Congregation Council President

Call Committee Chair

An Invitation to Congregational Discernment

Something like this could be used with the notification that the Congregation Council has recommended a candidate for call, and invites the congregation to a reception or other function to meet the candidate in preparation for a congregational vote.

It's pretty bold these days to profess to know God's will. In fact, many of us are inclined to be a little suspicious of people who too quickly and easily claim to know what God wants. Nevertheless, it is the task of the members of this congregation to seek God's desire in a very specific circumstance, the call of a new pastor in a given situation.

The call committee and council have gone about the work of discernment for some time. Now it's the congregation's turn. Here are some suggestions for your prayerful discernment in these last hours before you express in a vote your understanding of God's desire for a new pastor in this place.

- Pray to be “indifferent” to all but God's will. That is, ask God to help you let go of personal agendas and other attachments so God's voice can be heard above other interior voices.
- Seek conversation with wise Christians...since discernment is not a private enterprise.
- Pray with scripture. Romans 12-4, Ephesians 4, and Philippians 2 lift up the life of a Christian. I Timothy 3-5, II Timothy 2, and Titus 2-3 talk about the qualifications of leaders of the Church. Add to these your favorite scriptures that call us to remember a vision for God's reign on earth. These verses center us in God's grand desire for the people of God and the whole creation.
- Gather information *and* listen to your gut. Show up when the candidate is present for a reception and dialogue, and listen to both your head and your heart.
- Imagine God's future for this congregation and the pastor's place in it. God draws us forward into a time none of us have seen before. Imagine the challenges God has waiting for you, and ask if this candidate is God's gift to help lead you there.

In the few days before you vote, spend a few hours listening for God.

A Good Beginning

- Communicate acceptance of call and start-up date to congregation.
- Say a proper farewell for your transitional minister. Farewell and Godspeed is a suitable litany. A coffee hour or evening social hour or dinner is appropriate as an offering of gratitude and an opportunity to say good-bye.
- Plan how the congregation will help the new pastor and his/her family in their move to the community.
- Complete parsonage work *before* pastor moves in. Pastors usually are flexible with this, but it is a sign of hospitality to complete this work before the family moves in. If work will be done, it is gracious to let the new pastor and family offer their ideas and suggestions. It will be their home over the next years.
- (Council president) Arrange installation date with candidate, congregation, dean.
- (Council) Help coordinate and pay for the candidate's moving arrangements.
- Plan a welcome both within and outside the Sunday liturgy. Perhaps, plan a picnic or potluck.
- (Council and candidate) Set up a mutual ministry committee. After six months, using the mutual ministry covenant, the dean of the conference will conduct a six-month interview.
- Offer assistance to the pastor and his/her family as they adjust to a new community. Prepare a collection of local maps, information on the community, including schools, if relevant, a list of shops and cultural sights, names of medical professionals, and other information that will help orient the pastor (and family) upon arrival.
- Allow time for the pastor (and family) to settle into a new home and community.

Installation Service

The installation service provides an opportunity for the congregation to formally welcome the pastor, introduce the pastor to the wider community, and participate in what may be their first act of public ministry together. The date of the service is chosen in consultation with the pastor, parish musician, congregation, and dean of the conference and synod office. The dean is usually designated by the bishop to preside at the installation service and the pastor invites a preacher of his/her choosing. The service of installation should be held as soon as possible after the pastor's arrival.

The pastor usually does not know area Lutheran co-workers in the conference or the local clergy in the community. The congregation can help in making these connections. Setting up a small committee to plan the installation with the pastor will make everything run more smoothly, easily, and joyfully.

Here are some suggestions if you are wondering where to start:

1. Help gather the list of the local clergy. If there is an association, help the pastor find the leader who may have the membership list. Involve that leader in inviting others. The dean will be helpful in providing a Lutheran roster as well.
2. Ask yourselves: "What is the style of worship that reflects who we are as a congregation?" Remember that most installations are on Sunday afternoon because at other times clergy are not able to come. Often the service is a communion liturgy, though this is not necessary. Many think a vesper service is appropriate not only because of the time of day but also the length. The installation section is about 15 minutes. It is found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Occasional Services for the Assembly*.
3. Include as many people as possible in the service as this is a celebration of this new partnership in ministry that you share together. Don't forget to include the children.
4. Celebrate with food and fellowship. A reception usually follows—everything from a catered dinner to finger food has been offered. It's not the food but the fellowship that makes the difference.
5. Contact local newspapers so you formally announce your pastor's arrival. If a large newspaper is not willing, a local one usually is looking for news.
6. Acknowledge the assistance of the transitional pastor at the reception.

Mutual Ministry Support Committee

A mutual ministry committee should be set up within the first three months of the pastor's arrival. The committee's primary purpose is to strengthen the pastor's ministry through careful listening and sharing, reviewing and reflecting on the shared ministry, and providing an opportunity for fuller communication with the congregation. It is beneficial to use this group for regular and mutual feedback and evaluation. Often members of the call committee are best prepared to serve in this capacity for the new pastor's first year because they have already developed a rapport. *Pastor and People: Making Mutual Ministry Work* (available from Augsburg Fortress) is one excellent resource for this committee, and for the council.

Sixth-Month Review

Six months after the new pastor has begun ministry in the congregation, the dean of the conference will meet with the pastor and the Congregation Council to discuss how the goals set by the congregation in its profile, delineated in the mutual ministry covenant, are being addressed, and how the ministry of the congregation and pastor is progressing. The dean will submit a report to the bishop for follow-up of what will be, we all pray, a celebration of this new found partnership in ministry.

Resources:

Model Constitution for Congregations, Chapter 9

THE PASTOR

***C9.01.** Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected by [this congregation] [the Congregation Council] to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.

***C9.02.** Only a member of the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of ordained ministers who has been recommended for the congregation by the synodical bishop may be called as a pastor of this congregation.

***C9.03.** Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

a. Every ordained minister shall:

- 1) preach the Word;
- 2) administer the sacraments;
- 3) conduct public worship;
- 4) provide pastoral care; and
- 5) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world.

b. Each ordained minister with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:

- 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
- 2) supervise all schools and organizations of this congregation;
- 3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council; and
- 4) with the council, administer discipline.

c. Every pastor shall:

- 1) strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad;
- 2) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
- 3) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications; and
- 4) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and of the ___(*insert name of synod*)___ Synod of the ELCA.

***C9.04.** The specific duties of the pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor shall be included in a letter of call, which shall be attested by the bishop of the synod.

***C9.05.**

a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment, which, except in the case of the death of the pastor, shall be terminated only following consultation with the synodical bishop and for the following reasons:

- 1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
- 2) resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
- 3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;
- 4) the physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
- 5) disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty;
- 6) the dissolution of the congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
- 7) suspension of the congregation as a result of discipline proceedings.

***C9.06.** At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor shall be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.

***C9.07.** During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Unless previously agreed upon by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served.

***C9.08.** This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation before beginning service in a call to another congregation or employment in another ministry setting related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

***C9.09.** When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastors, the Congregation Council, and the

bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.

***C9.11.** With the approval of the bishop of the synod, the congregation may depart from *C9.05.a. and call a pastor for a specific term. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop shall meet with the pastor and representatives of the congregation for a review of the call. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of *C9.05.a.

***C9.12.** The pastor of this congregation:

- a. shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation;
- b. shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod; and
- c. shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.

***C9.13.** The pastor(s) shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

***C9.14.** The parochial records of this congregation shall be maintained by the pastor and shall remain the property of the congregation. The secretary of this congregation shall attest in writing to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his or her hands in good order by a departing pastor before the installation of that pastor in another field of labor or the granting by the synod of retired status to the pastor.

C9.20. Ecumenical pastoral ministry

C9.21. Under special circumstances, subject to the approval of the synodical bishop and the concurrence of this congregation, an ordained minister of a church body with which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially has established a relationship of full communion may serve temporarily as pastor of this congregation under a contract between the congregation and the ordained minister in a form proposed by the synodical bishop and approved by the congregation.

The Policy of the Metropolitan New York Synod on the Transition and Call Process⁴

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

⁴ Policy enacted by the 2007 Synod Assembly and revised at the 2015 Synod Assembly

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 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

As a transitional ministry begins, the synod will take several actions to determine the appropriate category of transitional leadership as well as any necessary steps the congregation may need pursue to foster its future ministry. Whenever applicable, the following independent reviews will take place for the ministry entering a transition:

1. An exit interview with both the pastor who is leaving and the congregation council (or leadership).
2. A review of the liturgical and worship style, its resources and theological practices.
3. An inspection of official church records of pastoral acts (e.g., baptisms, funerals, weddings).

4. A financial review conducted by an independent certified public accountant consultant for the congregation, according to the synod's minimum guidelines and based upon the churchwide Congregational Audit Guide.
5. A review of a physical property assessment report conducted by an independent licensed architect/engineer consultant for the congregation, according to the synod's minimum guidelines.
6. A review and validation of all current and necessary licenses, permits and other regulatory requirements for safe public assembly for worship and other ministries.
7. A review and validation of a current insurance appraisal of all properties and review of all current insurance coverage policies.

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 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

Additional notes:

Transition Pastor

Transition pastors shall not attend call committee meetings or the congregational meeting when the call of a pastor is being considered. The transition pastor shall absent him/herself from portions of a council meeting where specific candidates are discussed.

Upon completion of service, transition pastors shall certify to the bishop of this synod that the parochial records for this period of service are in order.

Compensation for transition pastors are based on synod compensation guidelines. Other arrangements may be made in consultation with the bishop's office.

Information on Intentional Interims

Visit www.imaelca.org for more information. Intentional interim pastors are expected to file quarterly reports with the bishop's office and attend regular synodical meetings for intentional interim pastors.

Ordained Leaders from Ecumenical Partners

Contracting with clergy from our ecumenical partners (Episcopal, Presbyterian, UCC, Reformed, Methodist, Moravian) is governed by formal agreements with these partners, and by permission of the bishop of our synod. Congregations must consult with the bishop in these matters.

Communication

Especially during a pastoral vacancy, members of the Congregation Council and call committee should commit to regular—ideally, weekly—attendance at worship. This is important for their own spiritual health, but also that they be visible and accessible as elected and appointed leaders of the congregation.

Congregational Meeting

Regarding voting age: The qualification of eligible voters is determined by the particular congregation's constitution (e.g. confirmed member in good standing, and 21 years and over.) New York State Religious Corporation Law provides that if the congregation's constitution does not state an age requirement, the eligible age shall be 21 years and over. New York State Religious Corporation Law also states that age 18 is the lowest age permitted to vote on these matters. If it is desirable to have members under the minimum voting age (either as set by the congregation constitution or state law) participate in an unofficial voting process, a separate ballot of a different color paper shall be used and a separate count of these ballots shall be taken. These ballots do not affect the outcome of the vote.

Notes:

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every one's conscience in the sight of God.

-2 Corinthians 4:1-2