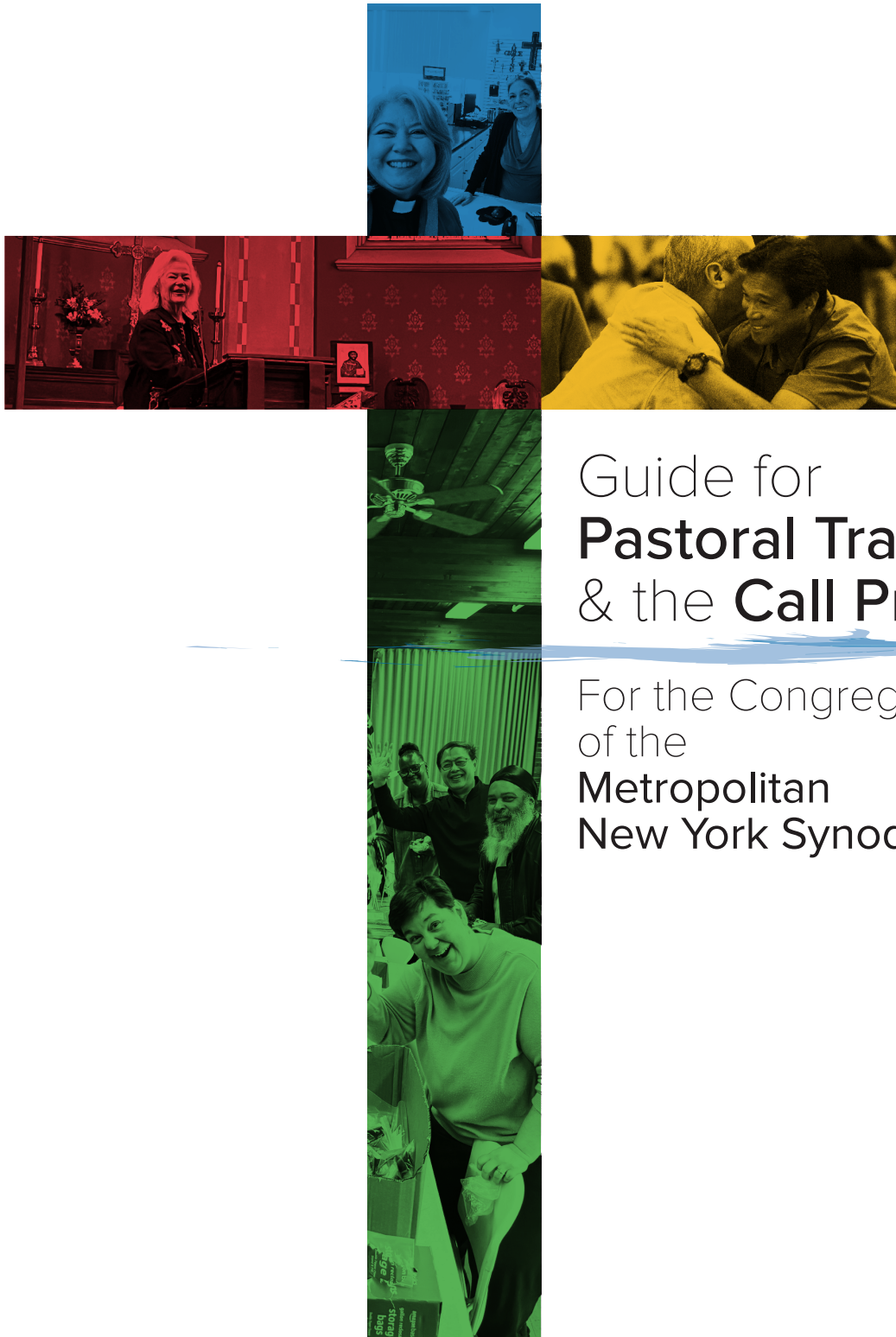




Guide for Pastoral Transition & the **Call Process**

For the Congregations
of the
**Metropolitan
New York Synod**



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The **MNYS Weekly Newsletter** is an excellent tool to stay connected and informed. Now, more than ever, we must remain engaged with one another, relevant in our faith communities, and prepared for what lies ahead. Offering access and information regarding synod resources, digital synodical events, to raising awareness of congregations' upcoming events. MNYS email is here for all of us.

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Help us create awareness of our email program among your congregation members!

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A Message from Our Bishop

Change is hard. And forces beyond your control can overwhelm you and your community of faith as you try to figure out what is next..

You are not alone. You are not the first to experience all that is happening right now. You and your community will get through this process.

And we at the Metropolitan New York Synod will walk and pray with you through it.

In the time ahead, you and your fellow servant leaders will help guide your community through a time of transition. There will be assessments of your property and finances. There will be new information about the demographics of your neighborhood through reliable data research. And your congregation will pray and discern who you are and who God is calling you to become.

As you read this ***Guide for Pastoral Transition & the Call Process***, remember we will get through this together.

I and the Assistants to the Bishop will walk with you, encourage you, meet with you and help you and your congregation navigate this transition.

We will read and respond to your emails, and we will return your calls. We are here to serve as a companion to our congregations.

My vision is for every congregation of our synod to be a place rooted in Evangelism, Discipleship, and Financial Stewardship. We are to be communities of faith where we see the face of Jesus in the face of all our neighbors.

We want each community to be a place where pastor and people can pray, worship and serve.

I am excited by how God is lifting up new servant leaders among you and among our clergy! Together, we will help all to know what a difference being loved by Jesus makes in our lives and in our communities.

Peace,
Bishop Katrina Foster

Pastoral Transition & The Call Process Overview

The steps outlined in this document provide a procedure that is orderly and helpful in calling a pastor. However, the real work has been done by the Holy Spirit who has been present in all of the activities, and in the hearts and lives of the persons who have worked with the process, guiding us all into a new season of ministry. We thank God for this gift of power that assists us all in fulfilling God's mission in the world in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Contact the Office of the Bishop

- Departing pastor should schedule separate meetings with the Bishop and Assistant to the Bishop (assigned to conference) prior to public announcement)
- Review with the Assistant to the Bishop: *A Guide for Pastoral Transition & the Call Process*

PHASE I: Healthy Transitions

1. Expectations of/for a Departing Pastor & Congregation

- Communicate with the congregation (letter, congregation newsletter, Sunday bulletin)
- Review **Checklist for the Departing Pastor** with Assistant to the Bishop
- Review **Checklist for the Congregation President** with Assistant to the Bishop
- Review **Checklist for Conference Dean** with Assistant to the Bishop
- Plan farewell and celebration of ministry events
- Review/sign covenants for departure/distribution to congregation
- Contact Conference Dean to review and attest official church records of pastoral acts (baptisms, funerals, weddings) and conduct exit interviews with departing pastor and congregation council
- Review/update membership roster. The roster shall be saved online and printed, as well
- Review/update constitution
- Review current staff policies (staff reviews, sexual harassment prevention training, Safe Church Policy)
- Review **Clergy Compensation Guidelines**
- Conduct a **Financial Review** and provide to the Assistant to the Bishop
- Conduct a Property Review/Assessment and provide to the Assistant to the Bishop
- In consultation with the Assistant to the Bishop schedule the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT) with Holy Cow Consulting
- Appointment by the Bishop of the transition pastor (coverage, term, interim, intentional interim) to provide pastoral ministry and service following the departure of the pastor

2. Transition Team

- Establish a Transition Team to coordinate the transition process
- Conduct a review and validation of current and necessary licenses, permits and other regulatory requirements for safe public assembly for worship and other ministries
- Review and validation of current insurance appraisal of all properties and review of all current insurance coverage policies

PHASE II: Congregation Mission & Ministry Assessment

3. Congregation Mission & Ministry Assessment

- Plan a congregational history celebration event
- Define and research the demographics of the surrounding community with the Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission via the FaithX Neighborhood Insights Report
- Interview members of the community/conduct a Community Assessment Probe

4. The Ministry Site Profile (MSP)

- Review **ELCA Guide to the Ministry Site Profile**
- Developed by the Transition Team using information from the Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT), FaithX Neighborhood Insights Report, and Community Assessment Probe
- Development of the suggested compensation package
- Present to the congregation for review and input
- Final approval by Council for public release

PHASE III: Call Process

5. Call Committee

- Appointment of a Call Committee (by the Congregation Council)
- Schedule a commissioning/installation of the Call Committee
- Orientation of the committee with Assistant to the Bishop
- Review the **Called To Be Among Us** resource for Call Committee
- Anti-racism/Anti-bias training for the Call Committee/Council
- Submit the suggested **compensation package** to the Assistant to the Bishop for review

6. Candidates

- Nomination by the Bishop of a candidate to be interviewed by Call Committee
- Interview candidate
- Call Committee's participation in worship to experience the candidate's preaching and worship leadership at the candidate's current parish or at a mutually agreed-upon neutral site. Worship participation via a digital platform (i.e., Facebook or YouTube) must be authorized/approved by the Bishop.
- Final interview of the primary candidate by the Call Committee
- Request authorization to obtain background check
- Recommendation of candidate to the Congregation Council by the Call Committee. Compensation package drafted
- Council meets with the candidate to discuss compensation package, start date, moving arrangements, and other details related to the call
- Congregation Council votes to recommend the candidate to the congregation

7. Call Vote by the Congregation

- Contact the Assistant to the Bishop to schedule a date for a congregational call

meeting in accordance with constitutional provisions. A date for the call meeting will be determined based on the availability of a synod representative to facilitate the meeting. The congregation president will receive a Call Meeting Packet containing required documents for the meeting

- The candidate (and family) may participate in a “Meet & Greet” with the congregation the day prior to the call vote
- Candidate is to preach and lead worship onsite (followed by the call meeting vote)
- Congregation call meeting is facilitated by the synod representative
- Candidate requires a 2/3 majority vote by written ballot; no absentee ballots allowed
- Candidate has 30 days to respond to and accept the call, from the date of the call meeting
- The Call Committee becomes a “Support Team/Mutual Ministry Committee,” meeting monthly with the newly called pastor, for the first year

PHASE IV: New Beginnings

8. Welcoming the New Pastor/Goals for the First Year

- Establish a welcome team for the new pastor (and family). If the pastor is moving with a rented truck, the congregation may be asked to help unload and move furniture/furnishings into the parsonage
- Create a “Welcome To Our Community Guidebook;” include suggestions for best restaurants, medical professionals, fitness locations, hair/nail salons, etc., and solicit a local realtor for a community welcome packet
- Plan a Welcome Event/Party for the pastor (and family) for their first Sunday, or another convenient day
- Coordinate and plan the Service of Installation for the pastor and the congregation with the Conference Dean within the first three months
- At the six-month mark, the Pastor and Council invite the Conference Dean to join them in a time of review and reflection of their ministry partnership
- At the six-month mark, establish a Mission/Vision Team to work with the pastor to engage in a process of visioning together
- At the six-month mark, coordinate a check-in with the Assistant to the Bishop
- At the twelve-month mark, establish a Mutual Ministry Committee, with selections made by the Pastor and Council President



Timeline for the Pastoral Transition & the Call Process

PHASE I 1-3 Months



Healthy Transitions: Healthy Termination of Call

- Expectations
- Checklists & Covenants of/for the Departing Pastor & Congregation President
- Letters of Agreement/Property Assessment for Congregations in Transition
- Financial Review/Assessment for Congregations in Transition
- Covenants for the Arriving Transitional Pastor

PHASE II 3-12 Months



Healthy Transitions: Pastoral Transition Process

- Establish Relationship with Transitional Pastor
- Establish a Transition Team



Congregation Mission & Ministry Assessment

- History of our Church Event
- Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT)
- FaithX Neighborhood Insights Report
- Community Assessment Probe
- "Play It Forward" Sunday
- Draft of Ministry Site Profile (MSP)

PHASE III 12-18 Months



Call Process

- Appoint a Call Committee
- Anti-bias/Anti-racism Training
- Compensation Package
- Candidate Interview Process
- Recommending the Candidate
- The Council Meeting
- Essentials/Announcement of the
- Congregational Call Meeting
- The Work of the Congregation

PHASE IV 18-24 Months



New Beginnings

- Establish a Welcome Team
- Mutual Ministry/Staff
- Support Committee
- Service of Installation
- Three & Six-month Follow-ups
- Visioning: Discerning a New Season of Mission & Ministry

Anticipated Costs/Price Sheet

1. Transitional Pastor.....\$ determined by category
2. Anti-bias/Anti-racism Seminar.....\$ 750 - \$1500
3. Financial Review.....\$ determined if Phase 3 is necessary
4. Property Assessment\$ 1000 - \$2500 (will vary based on number of buildings & geographic area)
5. Congregation Assessment Tool.....\$ 450 (+ interpretation fee)

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PHASE I: Healthy Transitions

PART I: Resources for Healthy Termination of Call

Meet with the Assistant to the Bishop for an orientation regarding the Pastoral Transition Process.

This should be scheduled as soon as possible following the announcement from your pastor that they are leaving, or in the event of a planned upcoming transition. This meeting would typically be with the Congregation Council.

Expectations of a Departing Pastor

When a pastor resigns from their congregation, the relationship between the parishioners and that pastor changes significantly. Both the congregation and the pastor need to recognize this change. Pastors who have accepted a call to a new parish can balance the grief of ending this relationship with the anticipation of forming new relationships and new opportunities for ministry. However, pastors who resign for other reasons (e.g., retirement, call to special service, or on leave from call) often are reluctant to transfer their membership and believe they and their spouses can remain as members of the congregation they served as pastor.

For the benefit of all, it is the expectation of the Metropolitan New York Synod that when a pastor resigns from a parish, they will transfer membership to another congregation. It is hoped that the pastor will be open to using the gifts God has bestowed on them in this new parish.

Parishioners who were close to their former pastor often want to continue the pastoral relationship at their family's baptism, wedding, or funeral. **It is expected that pastors will decline to perform any pastoral acts in their former congregation or for their former parishioners, unless requested by the pastor currently serving that congregation.** We expect pastors to be cautious about involvement even when invited, and to exercise good judgment.

After the resignation has been announced, but before the time of leaving, it would be helpful to include in the **parish newsletter and in several Sunday worship bulletins** a statement that the pastor will not be available to conduct or participate in events such as baptisms, weddings, funerals, hospital calls, emergency calls, or any other pastoral functions.

Close friendships that have developed over the years do not need to be terminated. However, it must be clear that these friendships cannot include any discussion of the affairs of the parish and/or of the leadership of the new pastor with his or her former parishioners. Nor is it appropriate for the former pastor to provide any personal pastoral care.

Define expectations of the role and responsibilities of council officers, deacons, staff, and conference dean.

Financial and practical issues need to be settled before a pastor leaves the congregation. Unused vacation time can be taken prior to leaving. If that is not possible, the departing pastor shall be paid for accrued vacation time. Continuing education time and monies end upon the termination of that pastorate, and the resigning pastor may not take such funds with them. Matters such as repayment of a housing loan or a specific date for moving from a parsonage must be agreed upon by the Congregation Council. **Pastors are urged to not enter into trust or fiduciary relationships with their parishioners.** However, if such a relationship exists, it should be terminated before the pastor leaves.

The presence of a former pastor at the installation of a new pastor is not recommended. Former pastor(s) may be invited to return for special parish events (i.e., Congregation Anniversaries).

When a problem arises, the Mutual Ministry Committee should be consulted first. If necessary, the Office of the Bishop should be consulted for guidance in resolving the issue. A Rite of Farewell and Godspeed will help to emphasize the termination of this pastoral relationship and may be offered during the resigning pastor's last Eucharist.

- ☐ **Checklist for the Departing Pastor**
- ☐ **Checklist for the Congregation President**
- ☐ **Checklist for the Conference Dean**
- ☐ **Financial Review**
- ☐ **Property Assessment**
- ☐ **Sample Letter: Attestation of Record & Financial Requirements**
- ☐ **Covenant Between the Departing Pastor (Not Retiring) & the Congregation**
- ☐ **Covenant Between the Congregation & the Departing Pastor**
- ☐ **Covenant Between the Retiring Pastor & the Congregation**



Conduct a Property Assessment for Congregations in Transition

The 2016 Synod Assembly added an addendum to the policy of the Metropolitan New York Synod on the Transition and Call Process that called for a property assessment for congregations in the transition and call process.

An independent, licensed architect/engineer OR a licensed/certified inspector will certify they have performed a cursory overview, similar to a home inspection performed during a real estate transaction, of the property and structures, to determine, most importantly, if any dangers are present.

This review will include:

1. A periphery inspection to determine if the conditions are satisfactory, need maintenance or repairs, or require significant/immediate attention.
 - a. Exterior (walkways, parking lots, windows, doors, siding, etc.)
 - b. Roofing
 - c. Structural (foundation, framing)
 - d. Electrical and Plumbing
 - e. Heating/Air Conditioning
2. A recommendation of commonly required regulatory licenses (i.e., assembly licenses) and permits (e.g., elevator inspection, building c/o's) that should be verified for compliance by the congregation
3. If required and requested, a detailed analysis of the areas of concern for corrective action
4. Review and validation of current insurance appraisal of all properties and review of all current insurance coverage policies

A formal report should be sent digitally to the Assistant to the Bishop in the Office of the Bishop.

Conduct a Financial Review for Congregations in Transition

The 2016 Synod Assembly added an addendum to the policy of the Metropolitan New York Synod on the Transition and Call Process that called for a financial review for congregations in the transition and call process. The financial review for the congregation is a two, possibly three-phase process and is coordinated through the Office of the Bishop. Phases I & II are conducted by the congregation's Transition Team. Phase III (if necessary) is conducted by a financial professional.

Phase 1: Basic Financial Viability

This information helps to assess the congregation's current financial position in the context of recent trends, and affords insight into the congregation's sustainability and future possibilities. Documents are gathered and sent digitally to the Office of the Bishop.

Please provide:

- A. Trend report from ELCA website
- B. List of council members and their offices/positions at three historical times: now, 5 years ago, 10 years ago
- C. Financial reports consisting of balance sheet, revenue and expense report, and restricted funds report for the most recent full fiscal year, and for equivalent times for 2, 5 and 10 years ago
- D. A recent sample payroll report (including regular 1099 payees)
- E. Most recent annual report to the congregation

- F. Most recent annual congregational report (Form A)
- G. A building/property assessment reasonably consistent with the synod's current documents

Phase 2: Business Management and Practices

This phase may be accomplished with an onsite visit but can be conducted with documents digitally submitted and a corresponding video conference. It provides a snapshot of the business practices of the congregation.

Please provide:

- A. List of persons who now, 5 years ago and 10 years ago:
 - 1. Reconcile the bank statements
 - 2. Count and deposit the offering
 - 3. Authorize disbursements by check or other means
 - 4. Sign checks for forwarding to payee
 - 5. Prepare the financial reports
- B. A copy of the current congregational constitution
- C. Sample reconciliation report for each financial asset
- D. A sample, full bank statement for each financial asset (best if it is the last statement in the most recent full fiscal year)
- E. A sample loan statement for each congregation loan (if it exists)
- F. A sample credit card(s) statement for any in the congregation's name
- G. A posting journal for the most recent three months (PDF)
- H. A sample Portico (or equivalent health and pension provider) invoice
- I. The most recent comprehensive/liability insurance policy declaration page(s)
- J. The most recent Federal 941 and State NYS-45 filings
- K. The most recent financial audit/review report

Phase 3: Financial and Business Management Processes Review

Phase 3 of the review is conducted only if there are specific questions regarding financial and business management processes that surface during Phase 1 or 2. This review would involve the engagement of a CPA literate in non-profit accounting.

Possible tasks related to the review:

- 1. Ask the bank(s) for a list of signers on the significant disbursement accounts
- 2. Obtain a posting journal for the most recent fiscal year (PDF)
- 3. Trace sample offering reports to the accounting records
- 4. Trace sample expense disbursements to the accounting records
- 5. Examine the offering donation record-keeping processes and associated security practices
- 6. Examine the processes for permitting usage of church property, including rent/lease agreements, and accounting for the revenue and associated expense
- 7. Verify proper handling and reporting of designated/restricted funds
- 8. Access Portico to determine the recorded compensation levels and the various benefit choices, and compare with synod guidelines
- 9. Examine the annual W-2 and 1099-Misc records for congregation payees, for reasonableness



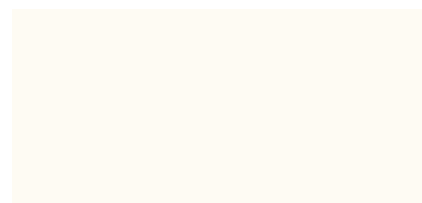
Transition Pastors

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. Notification of the appointment of a transitional pastor is to be made in writing to the congregation as soon as practicable following the announcement of the vacancy, but no later than the departing pastor's last Sunday.

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 for 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. Intentional Interim Pastor
- B. Interim Pastor
- C. Term-Call Pastor
- D. Coverage Pastor



Intentional Interim Pastor

During a pastoral vacancy, an intentional, **specially trained** interim may be recommended. Intentional Interim Pastors are appointed by the Bishop, called by the Synod Council and work with the congregation on specific issues prior to entry in the call process. An Intentional Interim Pastor cannot be a candidate for the regular call. Once their tasks in a congregation are complete, they can bring their particular skills to other places of need within the church. Such a pastor should be paid according to the Metropolitan New York Synod **Compensation Guidelines**, bearing in mind years of service and the cost of living in the area of service.

Interim Pastor

During a pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor may be recommended to address the need in some congregations, for greater pastoral presence in the time of transitions, such as ongoing program or staffing needs or because of specific issues of transition. Interim pastors are appointed by the Bishop, called by the Synod Council and may be eligible for the regular call with the Bishop's recommendation and/or approval. An interim pastor should be paid according to the Metropolitan New York Synod **Compensation Guidelines**, bearing in mind years of service and the cost of living in the area of service.

Term-Call Pastor

During a pastoral vacancy, a term-call pastor may be recommended to provide the duties associated with interim pastors but also assumes a significant level of the day-to-day pastoral work that might be expected of a pastor under regular call. Term-Call pastors are appointed by the Bishop, called by the Synod Council and may be a suitable candidate for the regular call.

Term-call pastors generally serve for 12 to 24 months or until the arrival of the newly called pastor (whichever comes first). If the term-call pastor is a suitable candidate 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 the 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 call pastor is no longer a candidate, the congregation may continue the call process.

Coverage Pastor

During a pastoral vacancy, a coverage pastor will assist the congregation in the administration of the basic operations of the congregation, meet with the congregation council, and provide for basic pastoral care and services. Ordinarily, the dean of the conference or another neighboring pastor will serve as the coverage pastor. The coverage pastor will direct all aspects of the transition and call process to the Assistant to the Bishop.

Coverage Pastor *(during a pastoral vacancy)*

\$250/week for congregations with up to 250 active/confirmed members

\$300/week for congregations with over 250 active/confirmed members

Pulpit Supply

\$250 for one worship service (morning or evening)

\$300 for two services (same day)

Travel Expenses *(mileage at the current IRS rate, tolls and parking if by car, or mass transit fares with receipt)*

Notes for treasurers:

(1) This compensation should be recorded as 1099 income if it exceeds \$600 per year.

(2) This compensation should be recorded as W-2 income.

(3) Reimbursements by voucher do not trigger IRS recording. No form is issued.



PART II: Pastoral Transition Process

Establish a Transition Team

The **Transition Team** is responsible for the Pastoral Transition Process, including the drafting of the **Ministry Site Profile (MSP)**. The Transition Team consists of 4-6 members (including a council member other than the President or the Vice-President) with the skills listed below. A chair should be selected that will serve as the Transition Team's primary contact to the Assistant to the Bishop.

- Organization
- Strong communications
- Varied networking connections
- Positive outlook
- Creativity
- Strategic thinking
- Strong writing skills
- Knowledge of working with computers and the internet

The Ministry Site Profile (MSP)

With the guidance of the Assistant to the Bishop, The Transition Team is responsible for the creation of the Ministry Site Profile (MSP) using the resource **available through the ELCA website**.

The Importance of Congregational Input

Although parts of the MSP can be assigned to individual members of the committee, it is important that there are times when the whole committee reviews and discusses the entire profile. Data should be collected, with as much congregational input as possible, through small group discussions, surveys, or other means of receiving feedback from members. It is best if the answers are concise, but it is important that they have been given thoughtful consideration and expressed in a comprehensive manner. Remember that this document is what the candidates will read as they decide whether to proceed in the call process with the congregation.

The Transition Team will meet throughout the transition process and will spend time filling out the MSP form. Sometime after the "Play it Forward Event," the team is to release a first draft copy of the MSP to the entire congregation, and asks for feedback. The congregation is given one week to respond with their suggestions, thoughts, or reflections.

After one week of input, the Transition Team may revise the document. The final report should be submitted to the entire council for its review and possible revision. After the MSP has been approved by the congregation council, a copy shall be sent digitally to the Assistant to the Bishop and submitted to the ELCA database. The Assistant to the Bishop may consult with the Transition Team to review the completed ministry profile, discuss the hopes and vision of the congregation, and answer any remaining questions about the process.



PHASE II: Congregation Mission & Ministry Assessment

Past – Present – Future Ministry

Conduct a History of our Church Sunday *(recommended)*

Invite the congregation to a **History Event following Sunday morning worship**. Plan for a two-hour event. Invite everyone; provide drinks, food, and a comfortable space to gather.

What you'll need:

- Hospitality: food and drinks
- Cups, plates, napkins, utensils
- Tables, preferably circular, marked by decade, with three sheets of large poster paper at each table
- Large poster board (Post-its work really well), markers, dark bold colors

Welcome and devotions (10 minutes)

Sample:

Today we explore who we've been to better understand who God wants and needs us to be. We'll explore each decade from the perspective of the people who joined the congregation during that time. This is not an exercise in details or facts. It is an exercise in perspective and remembrance. (Explanation)

Sample:

Please help yourself to the meal. When you return, you'll find that each table will have three sheets of paper (there will be more information about these later). Each table will explore a decade of time. Sit at the table marked by the decade when you joined the congregation. Please note, you will be sitting at the table marked with the period when you JOINED, not when you were born. If you are a child or a youth, please sit at the table marked by the time when your first memories begin.

Appoint a recorder to write, and a reporter to share your findings as you begin.

Discovering the Decades

- On the first sheet of paper, as a group, list: What, of significance, was happening in the WORLD?
- On the second sheet of paper, as a group, list: What was happening in RELIGION?
- On the third sheet of paper, as a group, list: What was happening in THIS CONGREGATION? For this particular question, consider denominational history (predecessor Lutheran body), building/construction dates, struggles, new leadership, neighborhood connections, etc.—all aspects of your story.

Sharing the Story

- Post each of the decades results around the room
- Share each of the decades with the whole group
- Questions to think about:
 - Are there any significant events missing?
 - What are common themes?
 - What strikes you?
 - Do you see any particular impact of leadership?
 - What influence did personalities have on the community?
 - What impact did the community needs or culture have on the congregation?
 - What impact did the congregation have on the community?
 - What role has the congregation taken on for the community and for individuals?

Introduce the Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT)

The Bishop's office strongly recommends congregations in the transition and call process to invest in the **Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT)** through **Holy Cow Consulting**. This customizable instrument is an excellent resource that provides a detailed analysis of congregational health.

The assessment helps congregational leaders:

- Measure the level of satisfaction and energy in the congregation
- Identify the essential success factors for enhancing the church environment
- Pinpoint the strengths of your congregation
- Discover members future vision for the congregation
- Measure readiness for change
- Explore potential resources you may be missing
- Prepare for a search for your next pastor

This tool goes beyond just a survey. With input from the entire congregation, it looks at the deeper trends in your church compared to other congregations and helps leaders make better decisions to guide mission, purpose, and strategic planning.

Contact the Assistant to the Bishop to schedule your CAT. The results of the survey are shared with the Assistant to the Bishop who will schedule the interpretation. The CAT provides support for the Transition Team preparing the Ministry Site Profile, as well as providing invaluable perspective to your Call Committee as they seek your next pastor.

Give a **summary report** to the congregation on the results of the CAT.

Define and Research the Demographics of the Community

MNYS uses the **FaithX** Project to conduct this research. FaithX offers congregations a Neighborhood Insights Report (NIR) with data-driven insights on over 40 key demographic and contextual factors. This helps in developing new ministries and effectively planning for redevelopment. Contact the Assistant to the Bishop to request your FaithX NIR report.

Conduct a Community Assessment Probe (CAP)

Two members of the Transition Team or the Council make two separate appointments with two local town officials. In our experience, two of the following persons are best: a local school principal, a local chief of police, a local town mayor or supervisor, a council member, or the leader of the local chamber of commerce.

Call to ask for an appointment, indicating you are from a local church and are in the process of searching for a new pastor, and seeking their input about the greatest needs in the community. You would like 15 minutes of the person's time.

Two of you go to the meeting, and at least one of you takes notes. During the conversation, you ask the following questions:

- In your experience, what do you see as the top two or three significant aspects of the community that we should know?
- Whom do you see working on those issues?
- Do you have any concerns about our community as you look into the future, and if so, what are they?
- What could our church do to help improve the quality of life in our community?
- When we call a new pastor to our church, could we bring them in to meet you?

Immediately following the conversation, do the following:

- Write and mail a handwritten note thanking the official for their time and input
- Write up your notes of the conversation and review them with your partner, in order to determine if you both heard the same information
- After you have conducted both conversations, provide a verbal update to the congregation on the following Sunday, and make your written notes available to the Assistant to the Bishop and the congregation, especially the MSP team

In our experience, every congregation that has engaged in this kind of **Community Assessment Probe (CAP)**, reports that it is one of the most eye-opening experiences. The rewards of this exercise cannot be adequately expressed.

Conduct a “Play It Forward” Sunday *(recommended)*

Invite the congregation to a “Play It Forward” event following Sunday morning worship. Plan for a two- hour event. Invite everyone; provide drinks, food, and a comfortable space to gather.

What you’ll need:

- Hospitality: food and drinks
- Cups, plates, napkins, utensils
- Tables and chairs
- Large, open wall space
- Large pieces of paper
- Markers, dark/bold colors
- Half-sheet pieces of paper
- Pens for everyone
- Post-it notes





Welcome, Meal, and Devotions (10 minutes)

Sample:

Today we'll begin to "Play It Forward." We'll think about what kind of congregation we are today and we'll dream about what God wants and expects from this congregation in the future. In each exercise, we encourage you to consider what you've learned about our congregation from the CAT (Congregation Assessment Tool).

Share in devotions.

With God, All Things Are Possible

- Give each individual a half sheet of paper, with the words: *"If this congregation truly believes that with God, all things are possible, in the next three years I would see..."*
- Have each person write an answer, post their answers on a wall, and then share their vision with everyone gathered
- Give everyone five "post-it notes," instructing them to indicate their top five priorities or preferences
- Tally the responses and review the top five priorities that have emerged
 - Reflect on these questions:
 - * How do the priorities fit with critical success factors?
 - * How do the priorities fit with the community needs assessment?
 - * What kind of opportunities do these provide?
 - * What obstacles are there to making these happen?

Wrap-Up/Draft of Ministry Site Profile (MSP)

- Explain that the Transition Team will create the profile, based on the information gathered
- Establish the date of MSP draft review with congregation
- Thank everyone for their time. Close with Prayer

The Transition Team will meet throughout the Transition process and will spend time filling out the MSP form. Following the "Play It Forward Event," the team releases a first draft copy of the MSP to the entire congregation, requesting feedback. The congregation is given one week to respond with their suggestions, thoughts, or reflections. Also, begin to collect suggestions for questions that the Call Committee might ask a potential candidate, based on the MSP.

After the week of input, the Transition Team may revise the document. The final report should be submitted to the entire council for its review and possible revision. After the MSP has been approved by the congregation council, a copy shall be sent to the Assistant to the Bishop and submitted to the ELCA database.

PHASE III: The Call Process

Appoint a Call Committee

It is not uncommon for members of the congregation to offer their services as members of the Call Committee. However, due to the tremendous responsibility entrusted to this group, **it is recommended that the Call Committee be appointed by the Congregation Council.**

If the congregation's constitution requires congregational election of the Call Committee members, nominations should be made by the Council. It is recommended that the chair of the committee be a member of the Council other than the President or Vice-President.

The Call Committee shall be composed of **six regular members** and, if desired, **one alternate***, including a council member (other than the President or Vice President) who will serve as the chair of the committee. The composition of the Call Committee should intentionally reflect the make-up of the congregation, assuring that all the different categories of age, gender, ethnic group, and differing lengths of membership in the congregation are represented. It is good to consider a youth or young adult (age 16-30) for this committee, assuming they will be able to attend the meetings. **It is recommended that members of the same family not serve on the Call Committee. Committee members should not be paid employees of the congregation, or their family members or rostered synodical deacons called by the congregation.**

The Council should appoint persons carefully, asking itself these questions about potential members who are committed to the Synod's Mission Priorities: Evangelism, Discipleship, Financial Stewardship, and Children, Youth, Young Adult and Family Ministry.

- Is this person firmly grounded in a relationship with Jesus Christ and committed to the search process as a prayerful journey under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?
- Does this person have the respect and trust of members of the congregation?
- Is this person able to respect confidentiality?
- Is this person open to future mission possibilities for the congregation and not simply eager to maintain the status quo?
- Is this person able to listen to others' opinions, and participate in an open and respectful discussion with other members of the committee?
- Is this person a confirmed, communing, and contributing member of the congregation who attends worship regularly and participates in the life of the community of faith?
- Will this person be able to attend all meetings and interviews and be able to attend worship in another setting, to experience the candidate's worship leadership?

In addition, consider adding an additional non-voting member to the Call Committee. This may be a person from your community who does not attend a church. In other words, they have no religious affiliation. We now live in a time when, in our region, 75% of the population does not attend a church or synagogue. It is important that the Call Committee, as well as the candidates, hear this perspective.

An ideal non-church-going person for the Call Committee would have these characteristics:

- They live in the community in which the church building is located
- Although not a participant in another church, they are not hostile or angry regarding religion in general
- They have a desire to make the community a better place to live

**The alternate is present at the Call Committee meetings as an observer (no voice/vote)*

Preparation

The Call Committee works **in partnership** with the Office of the Bishop, through the call process. The chair of this committee will be in regular communication with the Assistant to the Bishop and will be the primary contact during the initial stages of the call process.

The first responsibility of the chair shall be to **arrange a time for orientation of the committee**. The Assistant to the Bishop will meet with the Call Committee to provide the orientation and answer questions about the process.

Anti-bias/Anti-racism Training

The Call Committee and Congregation Council are required to participate in anti-bias/anti-racism training prior to interviewing candidates. The Office of the Bishop will provide the contact information for organizations that provide training/workshops. The congregation is responsible for the cost of the workshop and will provide written certification of the date of the training and the names of the participants to the Office of the Bishop.

Once the orientation and the anti-bias/anti-racism training have taken place, the Bishop will nominate a suitable candidate for the Call Committee's consideration. The Call Committee should begin preparing themselves to interview the candidate. Potential questions could be requested of the congregation. While all the questions need not be used, they give the congregation a chance to assume more ownership of the process, a process which, out of necessity, will become less public. The ***Called to Be Among Us*** document is a helpful resource in preparation for interviewing candidates. If requested, a neighboring or retired pastor may be able to participate in a mock interview.

Candidate's Compensation Package

Prior to meeting with the candidate, the Congregation Council—in conjunction with the financial officers of the congregation and the compensation guidelines adopted by the Synod Council—shall develop a suggested compensation package to be sent to the Assistant to the Bishop for review. Helpful forms used in this process are: **MNYS Compensation Guidelines and Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor**.

Candidate Interview Process

This is a process that requires absolute confidentiality. Upon completion of the required anti-racism/anti-bias seminar, the Call Committee will meet with the Assistant to the Bishop to review the completed MSP.

The Office of the Bishop will provide a candidate's name and Rostered Minister Profile to the Call Committee. The Call Committee follows the interview process outlined below.

***Note: The candidate nominated to the Call Committee is determined by several factors, including the availability of the candidate and proper match of the candidate to the congregation, in addition to other factors.*

The Call Committee interviews the candidate within three weeks of receiving their name. The purpose of this three-week time frame is to ensure that the Call Committee proceeds in an efficient manner.

The interview process includes time for questions and answers, as described below, as well as an experience of the candidate's worship leadership. Once the Call Committee has decided on the candidate, they must provide written communication to the Assistant to the Bishop and the candidate their intent to move forward with the process.

Receiving a Candidate

The Call Committee chair will receive from the Office of the Bishop, the name and Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) of the nominated candidate. The Bishop and staff spend a great deal of time communicating with pastors within this synod who seek a change of call, interviewing potential candidates for the synod (or, occasionally, contacting one who might be open to considering a new call), and communicating with persons across the country to discover excellent candidates. There is also time spent in prayer, reflection and staff discussion, to determine a good match between a candidate and congregation.

Names of candidates can arise and be considered by the Bishop and the Assistants to the Bishop from various sources. If the pastor is rostered in another synod, the Bishop of that synod must be consulted by the Bishop of the Metropolitan New York Synod before the pastor can be approached. The Bishop and staff take these suggestions seriously and pursue each one to determine if that pastor is an appropriate candidate for the congregation.

Once the staff has agreed that a candidate has the gifts and skills needed, that candidate is sent the congregation's Ministry Site Profile (MSP). After a candidate has given consent to be nominated, the Bishop will nominate the candidate to the Call Committee. No candidate may be considered by the Call Committee who has not been officially nominated by the Office of the Bishop.

Upon receipt of the candidate's Rostered Minister Profile (RMP), the Call Committee chair shall distribute the profile to the full committee, keeping in mind the need and high importance of confidentiality.

On the Sunday following the meeting with the Assistant to the Bishop, the Council President or designee announces the beginning of the call process to the congregation and explains the need for confidentiality while the Call Committee performs its work.

Information: What to Share, What Not to Share

The call process must observe a high degree of confidentiality. There are two reasons for this. One is to protect the candidate, whose congregation may not know they are considering a call to another congregation.

Members of the Call Committee and Council are requested to take care that the candidate's documents are kept secure and to discuss information only with those who are involved in the present stage of the process. Documents should not be retained in the church office files or in a place accessible to those other than the Call Committee. Difficult as it may seem, not even spouses should be informed of the details of the process. Also, friends and relatives who live far away should not be given confidential information. True stories abound of confidential information that traveled across the country and back again to trouble the congregation of an unsuspecting candidate.

The second important reason for confidentiality is to **protect the process**. If the name should become known throughout the congregation, modern communication technology enables people to find out about the candidate's background in ways that were not possible before. This could also result in members of the congregation second-guessing or trying to influence the Call Committee decision, and in that way jeopardize the mutual trust necessary within this process.



Communication in the Congregation

While highly confidential, the call process is not to be perceived as secretive. To this end, regular communication with the congregation is essential. Newsletter updates, announcements at worship, judicious use of the congregation's website, and the posting of a chart noting the congregation's progress through the steps in the process will all help the congregation remain apprised of how the process is proceeding. **All such notices need to focus only on the process, with no mention of anything that could identify the candidate.**

The Call Committee establishes a list of questions, plans the process, and determines the location they will use to conduct the interview, while awaiting the profile of the candidate.

On a weekly basis, the work of the Call Committee is raised in the prayers of the people during Sunday worship.

Sample Prayers (feel free to compose your own):

Gracious God, we give thanks for those who have been appointed to serve on the call committee and entrusted with the work of discerning a new pastor to guide this congregation. Grant to these men and women wisdom, patience, and the direction of your Holy Spirit, that they may exercise right judgment, and so serve you and the mission of your people here. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

OR

God of wisdom, in your goodness you continue to raise up faithful shepherds to serve your Church. Direct the members of our call committee as they seek to discern, on our behalf, a new leader to guide us in our mission in this place, that we may move forward together in mission.

Once every three weeks, the chair of the Call Committee provides the congregation with a **brief update** on the process, to date.

Interviewing the Candidate: A Two-step Process

Conversation with the Candidate

Upon receipt of the candidate's Rostered Minister Profile (RMP), the call chair should contact the candidate within three weeks, to arrange for the interview. *An initial interview may be conducted in-person or by video conference (Zoom).* The congregation is responsible for covering expenses incurred by a candidate traveling for an interview with the Call Committee, and for any subsequent visits at the invitation of the congregation. The congregation's budget should also include all the costs incurred by the Call Committee, such as phone, travel, meals, duplicating, and postage.

It is equally important to stay in **regular conversation** with the candidate. Members of the Call Committee and Council should remember that this is a time of nervousness and anxiety for the candidate, as well as for the congregation. Both sides should take responsibility for ongoing communication and should be sensitive to the needs of the other. If the planning of meetings or the communication of decisions are not shared promptly, there will be unnecessary anxiety and unpleasant feelings regarding the process.

Once the Call Committee receives a candidate's name, **a two-step interview process is initiated.**

First, the candidate meets with the entire Call Committee for an initial interview (in-person or by video conference). This meeting provides the first opportunity for conversation with the

candidate. Following the initial interview, the Call Committee will discern whether to continue with the candidate and schedule a second interview. A second interview should be conducted in-person. Members of the Call Committee are not to visit the candidate's present congregation without the candidate's permission.

Prior to the second interview, the Call Committee will provide the candidate with a packet that includes the Financial Review Report, the Property Assessment Report, the CAT Interpretation Results, the FaithX Report, and the congregation's current annual report.

The second step of the interview process (if moving forward with the candidate) is a visit to observe the candidate preach and lead worship at a neutral site. Arrangements will be made in mutual consultation and should take place as soon as possible after the second interview. At this stage, the candidate does not preach at the congregation in which a call is being considered. The Call Committee will vote whether to release or move forward with a candidate by a two-thirds vote. Once a candidate is released, they cannot be reconsidered. The Assistant to the Bishop must be included in all communications with the candidate and advised of the voting results.

Following the two parts of the interview process, the committee should share the responsibility of **contacting the candidate's references**. This offers the committee members the opportunity to ask any questions that may have come up during the interview. It is suggested that the candidate **meet earlier with the chair of the committee**, possibly including a meal, and spend time touring the church, parsonage (if one is provided by the congregation), and community. If there is no walkthrough of the parsonage at this time (if indeed there is a parsonage), provisions should be made for a tour prior to the interview with the Congregation Council.

This is a good time **to review the aspects of the community that are likely to be factors in the candidate's decision**: housing, schools, shopping facilities, medical resources, employment possibilities for the spouse, recreation facilities, parks, etc. The candidate shall be reimbursed by the congregation for the expenses of this and any subsequent visits.

Recommending the Candidate

After prayerful deliberation, the Call Committee shall determine whether to recommend a candidate for consideration by the Congregation Council. In many cases, the committee will reach consensus that the person should be recommended to the congregation to be the new pastor. If the committee cannot reach a unanimous decision, then a two-thirds affirmative vote will be sufficient to recommend the candidate to the Council. The chair of the Call Committee shall inform the Assistant to the Bishop, in writing, of the decision and request a special meeting of the Congregation Council to present the candidate. **The Assistant to the Bishop will request that the candidate give authorization for a background check. The findings will be sent to the Office of the Bishop.**

Not Recommending the Candidate

If the Call Committee decides not to continue working with the candidate, the chair shall immediately inform the candidate, in writing, of the decision, providing the reason(s) and relevant feedback to the candidate, and send a copy of the letter to the Assistant to the Bishop. Although it is difficult to write such a letter, it is important information for the candidate and helpful guidance for the Office of the Bishop in determining the qualities of the next candidate. The Office of the Bishop will be fully supportive of a Call Committee that has faithfully considered a candidate, participated in both steps of the interview process, and

then decided not to continue with that person. The Bishop and staff shall provide the name of another candidate as soon as possible after being informed of the committee's decision.

If the candidate does not sense a call to the congregation, after initial steps, they shall likewise inform the Call Committee chairperson, in writing, as well as the Assistant to the Bishop, outlining the reasons for the withdrawal. Once a candidate is chosen by the Call Committee, a report is shared with the Council.

The Work of the Congregational Council

The chair of the Call Committee shall communicate with the congregation President/Vice-President to arrange a meeting with the Congregation Council for the purpose of presenting the recommendation of the Call Committee. There should be a written recommendation prepared by the Call Committee, giving the committee's rationale for the decision and outlining the qualities of the pastor that are particularly outstanding and important to the leadership of the congregation. The congregation President/Vice-President shall preside. **The pastor serving during the transition does not attend this meeting. Members of the Call Committee may be invited to attend.**

From this point in the process, the communication with the candidate will be conducted by the congregation President/Vice-President. **It will be important for the Council to observe the same guidelines for confidentiality and timely communication that have been observed by the Call Committee.** The Assistant to the Bishop should be included on all communication between the candidate and the President/Vice-President.

Candidate's Spouse & Family

If the candidate has a spouse, that person might be included in a visit to the area at this time, but will not participate in the initial meeting with the Council. **The spouse is not being considered for call, and members of the committee and Council are advised against having any expectations of the spouse in relation to the congregation.** However, the spouse is highly regarded as the pastor's partner in life, and it is appropriate to ask questions related to the needs and role of that person in the life of the community of faith.

If the congregation owns a parsonage, the Council and candidate should discuss its upkeep, plans for any remodeling or redecorating, and any other concerns regarding it.

A time of social interaction may be planned with the candidate and Council, and the spouse and family may be introduced to the Council at this time. Plans should be made for the comfort of the spouse and family during this meeting.

The Council Meeting

The role of the Congregation Council, at this point in the process, is to receive and assume the recommendation of the Call Committee, trusting that the Call Committee is satisfied that the candidate's theology, practice of ministry, worship leadership, and preaching will provide the leadership the congregation requires.

The Council builds upon the Call Committee's recommendation by seeking to discern if there is any reason that the recommendation should not proceed to the congregation. This involves discussions of the mission of the congregation, compensation, living arrangements, starting date, and other practical considerations. The back page of the Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor document provides the starting point for this conversation.

The Finance Committee of the council should prepare a compensation package and send it to the Assistant to the Bishop for review. Note: Please review the MNYS Compensation guidelines

beforehand. The Council shall meet with the candidate to discuss compensation, start date, moving concerns, and other details related to the call.

After the Council and candidate have had a sufficient opportunity to get to know one another and discuss the possibility of ministry together, the candidate shall be excused. The Call Committee may stay for broader discussion or may be excused. The vote of the Council may be taken immediately or may be postponed for no more than one week, providing time for further prayer and reflection.

A two-thirds affirmative vote of the council is required to approve the recommendation of the Call Committee. The candidate and the Assistant to the Bishop should be informed immediately of the result of the vote and the council president should inform the candidate and the Assistant to the Bishop, in writing, to schedule a congregational call meeting. Complete the Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor form when an agreement is reached between the council and candidate.

Introducing the Candidate to the Congregation

Once the Council has voted affirmatively to recommend the candidate to the congregation, and the candidate has indicated their desire to continue in the process, **plans should be finalized for a meeting between the candidate and members of the congregation. At this point, the candidate's name is NOT to appear in the announcement to the congregation of the plans.** In fact, the candidate's name shall not appear in any mailed or internet publication until the candidate has accepted the call.

There should be **two types of events planned**: members should have an opportunity to meet with the pastor (and family) informally, and the congregation should also be able to experience the pastor leading worship and preaching. The congregational vote is held on the day the candidate preaches. No streaming or recording of the call service is permitted. Only congregation members remain for the call meeting.

A plan should be made for the candidate to meet with members of the congregation on a Saturday at an informal reception and then lead worship in the congregation on the following morning. The candidate shall prepare a one-page biography to be available at the reception. **Normally, the congregation will hold only one service that day, at which the candidate will preach and lead worship. It would be helpful to provide a time for brief questions and answers following the worship service at which the pastor has presided.** Members of the Call Committee and Congregation Council should be prepared to respond.

Essentials of a Call Meeting

A congregational meeting date is determined by the Office of the Bishop in consultation with the congregation, candidate, and the synod representative who will preside over the vote. A congregation call meeting packet will be prepared and provided to the congregation President/Vice-President by the Office of the Bishop.



Congregation Council President:

- Receives a call meeting packet from the Office of the Bishop and consults the constitution of the congregation regarding the requirements for a quorum and voting membership. New York State Religious Corporation Law provides that if the constitution of the congregation does not specify an age, the eligible voting age shall be 18 and over.

Candidate:

- Preaches and, if ordained, or licensed by the Bishop, presides. If you typically have more than one worship service that day, combine them into one, if at all possible.

Congregation President/Vice-President:

- Convenes the call meeting following worship, introducing the Synod Representative who will conduct the meeting. If desired, the candidate can make a statement before leaving the sanctuary, after which the voting will take place.

Congregation Council:

- Provides the congregation with a brief biography of the candidate and the compensation package. These are the only items to be voted on.

Voters:

- Sign in and must be members in good standing. Vote by written ballot—yes or no. There are no abstentions. Absentee ballots are not permitted.

Counters:

- Chosen prior to the meeting, collect and count the ballots. The synod representative must witness the ballot count. A two-thirds majority is needed to call. Results are announced to the congregation immediately following the completion of the count.

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 the 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 Assistant to the Bishop. A letter of acceptance must include the start 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.

Announcing the Congregational Call Meeting

The congregation President/Vice-President will arrange for the announcement of the Congregational Call Meeting in accordance with the requirements of the congregation's constitution. These normally include notification by first-class mail at least ten days, including two Sundays, in advance of the meeting (including the Sunday on which the vote is held). It is important that the chief lay leader consult the congregation's constitution for any other stipulations.

There will be only **one item of business at the meeting**: A vote to call the candidate to be pastor, which includes the compensation package for the pastor. A synod representative authorized by the Bishop will conduct the meeting.

The announcement, in writing, pertaining to the special congregational meeting to call a pastor shall not include the name of the candidate or any identifying information.

SAMPLE LETTER OF NOTIFICATION: To Congregation of Call Meeting

Date of Letter _____

NOTICE OF SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Date: _____ Time: _____

Purpose: _____

Immediately following _____ worship service

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

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
- 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 _____, 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 _____ (insert 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 that will need to be changed to fit the description of your candidate).

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

Examples:

- 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



The Work of the Congregation

There is only **one item on the agenda at the special meeting**: The call vote, which includes the compensation package. A synod representative (*assigned by the Office of the Bishop*) will conduct the special congregational meeting to extend a call to a pastor.

The congregation President/Vice president shall be in communication with the synod representative to confirm that the meeting has been announced according to the constitution and that everything is in order for the day. A copy of the membership roll/roster and a copy of the congregation constitution should be provided to the synod representative. There should be ballots, writing utensils, tellers, and an adequate number of copies of the compensation package available for distribution. Plans should be made to greet the candidate and provide the necessary information for conducting the worship service.

The meeting should take place immediately after the service. The synod representative serves as the chair and will facilitate the meeting according to the agenda. The candidate may provide a statement to the congregation before being excused (with their family). A brief period of discussion regarding the candidate may be addressed to the call committee/congregation council members. Following discussion, the synod representative initiates the vote by written ballot and announces the results of the vote.

The congregation President/Vice President shall inform the candidate, with the number of affirmative and negative votes. It would be appropriate to call them back into the meeting to announce a positive vote, with acclamation.

A favorable vote indicates that a call has been extended by the congregation to the candidate. The pastor-elect has thirty days in which to respond to the call. In many cases, the person will respond immediately, but there are times when a pastor-elect might want to take additional time for prayerful consideration.

Letter of Call

The congregation call meeting packet will include the **Letter of Call** and the Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor form. The congregation President/Vice President should have the completed ***Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor*** form prepared on the day of the call meeting.

Following an affirmative call vote, these documents (*Letter of Call and Definition of Compensation, Benefits and Responsibilities of the Pastor*) are signed by the council President/Vice-President and congregation secretary and returned to the synod office by the synod representative. Assuming that the documents are in good order, and consistent with the understanding that has been reached by all parties, the Bishop will attest to the call by signing the forms. The originals will be given to the newly-called pastor, and copies kept at the synod office for filing, and sent to the congregation.

Consult with the pastor-elect regarding the timeline for public announcement of the call. Remember that in many cases, the called pastor will need to make the announcement of the new call to their present congregation. The newly called pastor will need to take an appropriate amount of time to conclude that ministry and plan the move to a new location. It is recommended that a pastor take a minimum of two weeks transition time between calls, not including the time that the move requires. **Although both the pastor and congregation will be eager to begin the new relationship, it is wise to allow time for rest and renewal before the demands of the new ministry begin.**

PHASE IV: New Beginnings

Establish a Welcome Team

After the call has been extended by the congregation, a **Welcome Team** should be established to coordinate the welcome of the new pastor and family. It is recommended that this group first oversee any renovation that is required for the parsonage. It will surely be an important sign of the congregation's reception to the new pastor if the parsonage is freshly painted, carpets cleaned, all appliances in good repair, bushes trimmed and grass mowed. This group can also assist with other aspects of the pastor's relocation and serve as a steering committee for a social time on the pastor's first Sunday, in addition to other opportunities to get acquainted with the congregation and community.

Moving Costs

The congregation is responsible for the cost of the move. These include payment for moving personal goods, mileage for family cars, and costs of meals and motels, if the distance requires. Estimates from moving companies offering discounts should be received and the congregation invoiced directly.

In a short distance move, it may be tempting for the pastor to assume the move personally, or for a moving crew from the congregation to undertake it in order to reduce expenses. Congregations should bear in mind, however, that either has the potential of injury to persons or property, thereby straining the future relation between the pastor and congregation.

If necessary, the pastor may be encouraged to carefully pack as many personal belongings as possible, thereby reducing professional moving costs.

There may be tax implications for the pastor connected with moving expenses. They should obtain the IRS publication 521, "Moving Expenses," and consult with their tax advisor.

Once the move has been planned, it will also be important to provide such additional activities as hospitality to the pastor and pastor's family on moving day, assistance with settlement into the community, and an event in the congregation to welcome the new pastor. All these efforts to prepare housing, greet and welcome the pastor and family, and provide assistance will be much appreciated, and will help to assure the good beginning of a strong ministry between pastor and congregation.

The **Welcome Team** begins inviting the congregation to help with a Welcome Our New Pastor guidebook. This booklet may include well wishes and prayers written by members of the congregation, a collection of local maps, information on the community, schools, cultural sights, medical professionals, restaurants, etc.

Consider a Welcome Basket of food and goodies to be placed in the parsonage upon arrival of your new pastor. One congregation we know of, chose to stock the refrigerator for the newly arrived pastor. These gestures are important ways to welcome your new pastor and get off to a good start in ministry together.

The Welcome Team plans a welcome party for the new pastor, possibly for their first Sunday or another convenient day. The Call Committee continues to meet and serve as a support team for the new pastor, for the first year.

They are encouraged to meet once a month with the new pastor during this time period. This is to be a supportive committee assisting the pastor as they settle into the congregation and community.

Mutual Ministry/Staff Support Committee

It is recommended that a Mutual Ministry Committee, or Staff Support Committee be established within three months of the pastor's arrival. This 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 would be beneficial to develop goals for the ministry, and to engage in regular and mutual feedback and evaluation. It is recommended that members of the Call Committee serve in this capacity for the new pastor's first year. An excellent resource for this committee, and for the council, is: *Pastor and People: Making Mutual Ministry Work* (Augsburg Fortress). After that year, a new Mutual Ministry Committee should be established, with **selections made by the pastor, in consultation with the Council President.**

Service of Installation

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. **This service takes place within the first three months following the arrival of the pastor.** The date of the service is chosen in consultation with the pastor, parish musician, congregation, and dean of the conference. The dean is usually designated by the Bishop to preside at the installation service, and the pastor invites a preacher of their choosing.

Here are some suggestions as to how to start:

1. **Gather a list of 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. **The style of worship should reflect the congregation.** Most installations are on Sunday afternoon and is often a communion liturgy (though this is not necessary). Many consider a vesper service appropriate, not only because of the time of day, but also the length of the service. The installation rite may be 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 ministry partnership. Don't forget to include children!
4. **Celebrate with food and fellowship.** A reception usually follows—everything from a catered dinner to finger food can be offered. It is not the food, but the fellowship that makes the difference.
5. **Contact local newspapers** so you can formally announce your pastor's arrival. If a large newspaper is not willing, a local one is often looking for news.
6. **Acknowledge the assistance of the transition pastor at the reception.**

Six Month Follow-up

After the new pastor has been installed in the congregation, and the pastor and congregation have reached the six-month mark, the Conference Dean will conduct separate ministry reviews with the Congregation Council and the pastor. The purpose of the ministry review is to **discuss how the goals set by the congregation in its profile, are being addressed, and how the ministry of the congregation and pastor is progressing.**

Six-Month Visit Guide

After a new pastor has been installed in a congregation, there will be a visit to/conversation with the Congregation Council and pastor by the dean of the conference, to review the progress of the ministry of the congregation and the pastor.

TIME: Six months after the new pastor is in the congregation.

WITH WHOM: The dean will meet separately with the pastor and the Congregation Council.

DURATION: Approximately one hour.

PURPOSE: To review with pastor and Congregation Council, the progress of the ministry of the congregation for which pastor and congregation are mutually accountable.
To encourage open communication between pastor and Congregation Council.
To offer the resources of the Bishop and the staff of the synod to respond to needs.

MATERIALS: Copy of the Ministry Site Profile developed during the vacancy, particularly any goals set for the congregation.

PROCESS The dean contacts the pastor shortly after the pastor commences ministry in the congregation, to welcome them into the conference and to set a date for a meeting with the pastor and Congregation Council, approximately six months after the pastor begins. The meeting should preferably not be part of a regular meeting of the Congregation Council but should be devoted to the visit of the dean.

The dean should confirm the date in writing.

The president of the Congregation Council should open the meeting with prayer, introduce the dean and ask the dean to proceed.

Following a brief explanation of the purpose of the meeting, the goals should be read and a discussion of the progress made toward the accomplishment of each goal should be engaged in. There should be opportunity to discuss other aspects of the ministry about which the congregation is excited or concerned, and time should be set aside to talk about new goals that are emerging and other positive things that are taking place in the congregation. If appropriate, the opportunity should be taken to encourage the Congregation Council to set new and perhaps more specific goals for the ministry of the congregation.

During this discussion, there should emerge a rather good impression of how well the pastor and congregation are working together. Bring this portion to a productive conclusion.

Next, ask the council to comment on how well the relationship between the pastor and congregation has been progressing. The pastor should also be requested to comment on how well they feel the relationship has been progressing. Offer the resources of the Bishop and the staff of the synod to respond to the needs of the congregation.

REPORT: Complete a brief report to the Bishop, with copies to the pastor and Congregation Council, including:

- Date of the meeting
- Name and address of the congregation

- Name of the pastor
- Progress achieved on each goal
- Concerns that emerged which the Bishop should be aware of
- Comments

NOTE: This process is not used for Assistant/Associate Pastors.

In the case of Assistant/Associate Pastors, the Dean should contact the new Pastor to welcome them into the conference. Contact should also be made with the senior pastor, suggesting that they assess the ministry and the developing team relationship approximately six months after the Assistant/Associate began, using as the basis for the evaluation the position description developed for the Assistant/Associate.



Report on Six-Month Visit

(to be prepared by the Dean)

Metropolitan New York Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

1. Interview Date: _____

2. Name of Congregation/Ministry: _____

Address: _____

3. Name of Pastor: _____

4. Date of Call: _____ Start Date: _____

5. Conference: _____

Dean: _____

During the first six (6) months:

1. What have been some blessings and joys for the congregation (and Pastor)?
2. What are some of the surprises the congregation (and Pastor) has experienced?
3. What have been your greatest accomplishments and satisfactions (congregation/Pastor)?
4. What frustrations have you had? What has blocked your effectiveness? (congregation/Pastor)
5. Describe the relationship that has emerged between Pastor and the congregation?
6. Name three (3) areas of focus/goals that should take priority in the next year.
7. What resources do you need to achieve those goals?
8. Schedule a check-in date to review progress.
9. Concerns which emerged about which the Bishop should be aware of:
10. Additional comments: *(Attach additional sheet, if necessary)*

Return To

The Office of the Bishop
Attn: Assistant to the Bishop *(insert name)*
Metropolitan New York Synod
475 Riverside Drive, Suite #1620
New York, NY 10115

Visioning: Discerning a New Season of Mission & Ministry

After the new pastor and congregation have been together for six months and have gotten to know each other, the time is ripe to engage in a process of visioning together. This is a wonderful time to assess the present ministry of the congregation and to think and pray about where God is leading as the congregation goes forward in ministry with its new pastor. This visioning may take several forms.

Congregations may consider engaging in a visioning process that may include a variety of formats, a series of events, an overnight retreat, or any combination thereof. A consultant or trained visioning professional may be engaged for this process.

Costs are negotiated with the leader, depending on the format and duration of the process. By the end of the process, participants may expect at least a draft of a vision statement to be produced and used later to help shape mission priorities.

The Assistant to the Bishop shall assist with matters related to the transition and be available for support and guidance for the pastor and family. There shall be a visit planned with the Congregation Council toward the end of the first year, to provide an opportunity for conversation and feedback, and to assure the pastor and congregational leadership of the ongoing support and involvement of the Office of the Bishop.



APPENDIX

1. Checklist for the Departing Pastor
2. Checklist for the Congregation President
3. Checklist for the Congregation Dean
4. Covenant between the Departing Pastor (Not Retiring) & the Congregation
5. Covenant between the Congregation & the Departing Pastor
6. Covenant Between the Retiring Pastor & the Congregation
7. Sample Letter: Attestation of Record & Financial Requirements
8. Community Assessment Probe
9. Sample Letter of Notification to Congregation of Call Meeting



Checklist For The Departing Pastor

- ☐ 1. Pray first.
- ☐ 2. Discuss plans with the Assistant to the Bishop before resigning. Notify the Dean of the Conference prior to your resignation.
- ☐ 3. Submit a letter of resignation to Congregation Council and send a copy to the Bishop, with a minimum of 30 days' notice.
- ☐ 4. Review **Phase I: Healthy Transitions**, including the covenants, with the congregation president. Arrange to discuss them at your next Council meeting.
- ☐ 5. Make plans with the congregation leadership for farewell events, including the **Rite of Farewell and Godspeed for a Pastor**.
- ☐ 6. Make yourself available for members to say goodbye, including visiting and communing the homebound.
- ☐ 7. Make time to say your own goodbyes, as well as time for moving chores.
- ☐ 8. Discuss **Phase I: Healthy Transitions** with the Council, after which you and the congregation president will sign your respective covenants. Summarize the intent and details of these covenants in the parish newsletter and in a few Sunday worship bulletins.
- ☐ 9. If resigning without another call, write to the Bishop, within forty-five days, to request recommendation for "on leave from call" status to Synod Council for approval. Include appropriate dates and indication of new congregational membership.
- ☐ 10. If retiring, contact Portico Benefit Services for necessary paperwork, which will include contact with the Bishop and Synod Council approval. Plan for transfer of membership within six months.
- ☐ 11. Inform Portico Benefit Services of this change and its effective date.
- ☐ 12. Ensure the parish register is completely up-to-date, and then ask the congregation president to arrange for the Conference Dean to review and attest.
- ☐ 13. Complete all financial obligations to and from the congregation and ask the president to send a letter to the Bishop stating either that there is no indebtedness or that a mutually agreed-upon repayment plan has been established.

- ☐ 14. Leave a list of homebound members, including addresses and telephone numbers, as well as any directions/information that might be helpful to the new pastor.
- ☐ 15. Provide a list of upcoming pastoral acts to appropriate leadership people, including dates, telephone numbers, and other pertinent information.
- ☐ 16. Contact the Conference Dean to schedule an exit interview.

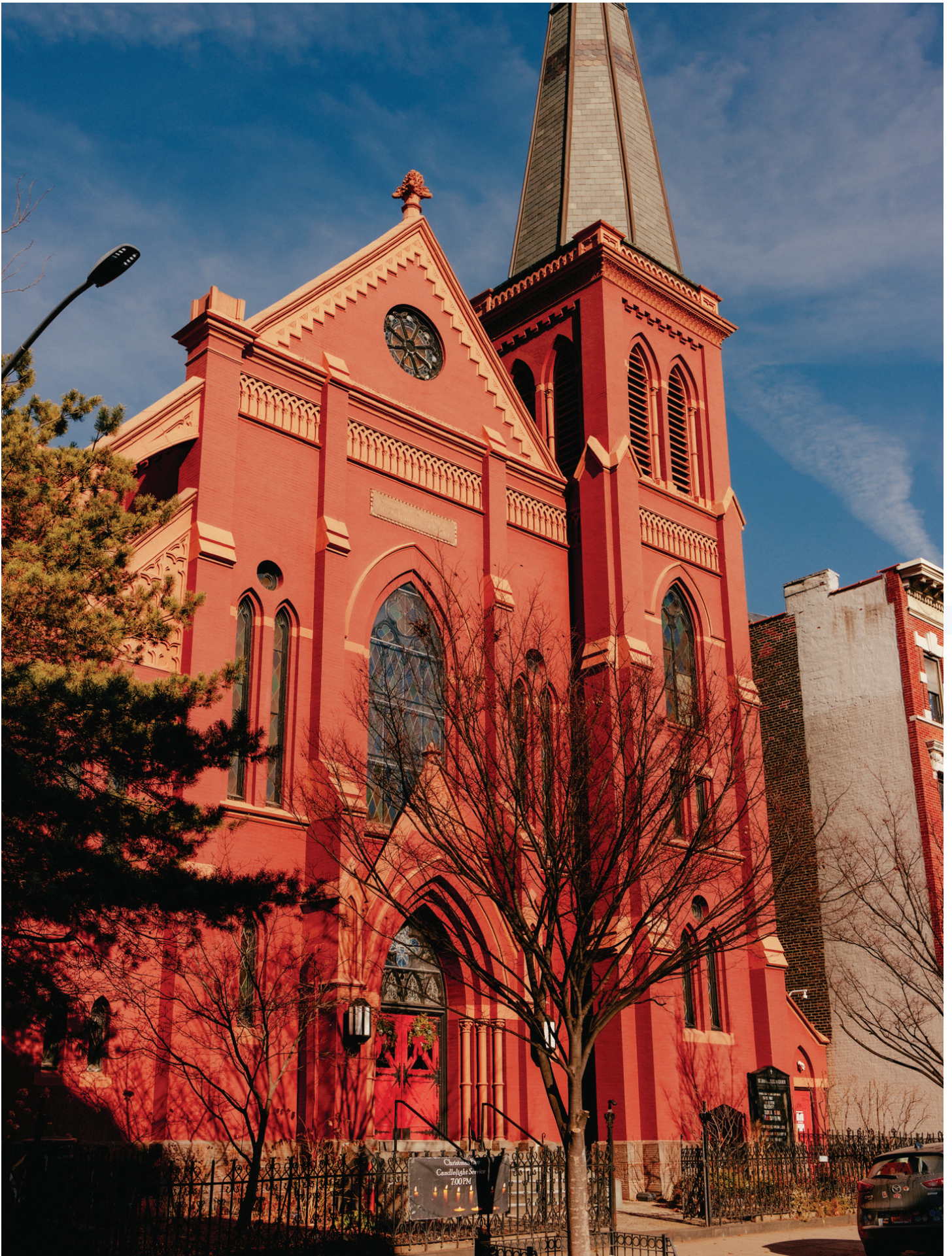
Checklist for the Congregation President

- ☐ 1. Call the Assistant to the Bishop to arrange a meeting with the congregation council.
- ☐ 2. Review **Phase I: Healthy Transitions, Part I** with the pastor.
- ☐ 3. Make plans with the pastor for farewell events, including the **Rite of Farewell and Godspeed for a Pastor**.
- ☐ 4. Discuss **Phase I: Healthy Transitions, Part I**, with the Council. Sign covenants. Summarize the intent and details of these covenants in the parish newsletter and several Sunday worship bulletins.
- ☐ 5. Ensure the parish register is up-to-date. Arrange for the Conference Dean to review and attest. The secretary of the congregation must submit, in writing, to the Bishop that the parish records are in order.
- ☐ 6. Submit, in writing, to the Bishop that all financial obligations to and from the pastor are completed, or that a mutually agreed-upon repayment plan has been established.
- ☐ 7. A sample of the letters mentioned above is found in the **Appendix** to this document.
- ☐ 8. Conduct a property assessment (**Property Assessment for Congregations in Transition**).
- ☐ 9. Conduct a financial review (**Financial Review for Congregations in Transition**).

Checklist for the Conference Dean

- ☐ 1. Meet with departing pastor prior to announcement.
- ☐ 2. Exit interview with departing pastor.
- ☐ 3. Exit interview with the congregation council.
- ☐ 4. Attestation of parish registers/records with departing pastor and congregation president.
- ☐ 5. Welcome the transition pastor.
- ☐ 6. Welcome new pastor.
- ☐ 7. Plan installation of new pastor.
- ☐ 8. Six month follow-up with pastor.
- ☐ 9. Six month follow-up with congregation president.





Covenant Between the Departing Pastor (Not Retiring) & the Congregation

As Christians, we all are baptized into the priesthood of Christ to offer ourselves to the Lord of the Church in thanksgiving for what he has done and continues to do for us. It has been my privilege to support the mission and ministry of _____ at _____, as pastor.

In prayerful conversation with the Congregation Council of _____, I have reviewed **Section A: Healthy Transitions** and discussed the expectations of the Metropolitan New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and I enter into the following Covenant.

I agree:

- to pray for the ongoing mission of the congregation and for its new pastor
- to respect the terms of the attached Covenant of _____
- to communicate to the congregation, in writing and conversation, the terms of the Covenant, which terminate this pastoral relationship
- to not be involved in or associated with any leadership or advisory role (public or private) in this congregation and to refrain from behaviors that seek in any way to control the transition process, including any attempt to influence the choice of a successor
- to refrain from language or behavior that could undermine the development of the relationship between the congregation and a new pastor (temporary or successor)
- to not support or give advice to anyone involved in a congregational disagreement
- to refuse requests for pastoral services made by members of the congregation, including baptisms, weddings, funerals, anniversaries, visiting the sick and homebound, etc., except as invited by the current pastor, and to consult with the current pastor regarding attendance at worship and special events
- to encourage my family members to support me in maintaining this Covenant and to support the ministry of the congregation's new pastor

(Other items may be added that are consistent with the particular relationship and mission of this congregation.)

It is understood that this Covenant does not affect or require termination of friendships with individuals who are members of this congregation.

Signature of Pastor: _____ Date: _____

Witnessed by President (Vice-President): _____ Date: _____

Describe how shared with congregation, including dates: _____

**After sharing this Covenant with the congregation, please mail a copy of the completed and signed document to the Assistant to the Bishop in the office of the Metropolitan New York Synod, where it will be kept in the departing pastor's file.*

Covenant Between the Congregation & the Departing Pastor

As Christians, we all are baptized into the priesthood of Christ, to offer ourselves to the Lord of the Church in thanksgiving for what he has done and continues to do for us. It has been our privilege to support the mission and ministry of The Reverend _____ as pastor of _____ at _____.

In prayerful conversation with Pastor _____, the Congregation Council, on behalf of the congregation, has reviewed Section A: Healthy Transitions and discussed the expectations of the Metropolitan New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and we enter into the following Covenant.

We agree:

- to pray for the ongoing mission of our congregation and for our pastoral leadership
- to respect the terms of the attached Covenant of Pastor _____
- to incorporate both Covenants in the minutes of a called Congregation Council meeting
- to communicate to the congregation, in writing and conversation, the terms of the Covenant that terminates this pastoral relationship
- to refrain from asking our former pastor to perform pastoral services, including baptisms, weddings, funerals, anniversaries, visiting the sick and homebound, etc., and to remind members to refrain from making similar requests
- to show respect and regard for our new pastor (temporary or successor) by supporting him/her in performing pastoral duties, and to encourage parishioners to seek pastoral services from our new pastor
- to celebrate what will be as we honor what was, and...

(Other items may be added that are consistent with the particular relationship and mission of this congregation.)

It is understood that this Covenant does not affect or require termination of friendships with individuals who are members of this congregation.

Signature of President (Vice-President): _____ Date: _____

Witnessed by Pastor: _____ Date: _____

Describe how shared with congregation, including dates: _____

**After sharing this Covenant with the congregation, please mail a copy of the completed and signed document to the Assistant to the Bishop in the office of the Metropolitan New York Synod, where it will be kept in the congregation's file.*

Covenant Between the Retiring Pastor & the Congregation

A graceful change: What congregations and their retiring pastors can expect of one another.

We _____ and _____ are entering into a new relationship together. As pastor and people, we have walked together through a time that has included joys and celebrations, times of grief and sorrow. We have laughed, cried and perhaps even exchanged a few words we wish we hadn't. Our time has included the full complexities of life, faith and ministry. Now we enter a new phase of that relationship as pastor and people. While we will remain connected by our past experiences, we acknowledge that we are entering a new time. This document describes some of our expectations of each other in this new time.

Generally and fundamentally, we both expect that _____ will humbly relinquish all aspects of pastoral ministry in order that a new, strong, and healthy relationship can develop between _____ and its new pastor.

Specifically, we expect that:

- _____ will not seek, in any way, to influence the transition process, including any attempt to influence the choice of a successor.
- _____ will not be involved in the pastoral ministry of _____ nor will they take any leadership or advisory role (public or private) in _____
- Although it will no doubt be tempting to invite _____ to participate in the significant events in the lives of the people of _____ - including baptisms, weddings, funerals, and anniversaries - we recognize that doing so would undermine both the ministry of the next pastor, as well as the healthy transition into retirement by _____. Therefore, _____ will not extend such invitations and _____ will decline them, if extended.
- _____ and their family will join another congregation.
- Where friendships have been established between _____ and members of _____, we will be thoughtful in how we embrace those friendships as they relate to the congregation, being careful not to let friendships merge into acts normally associated with the pastoral office.

(Other items may be added that are consistent with the particular relationship and mission of this congregation.)

Signature of Pastor: _____ Date: _____

Witnessed by President (Vice President): _____ Date: _____

**After sharing this Covenant with the congregation, please mail a copy of the completed and signed document to the Assistant to the Bishop in the office of the Metropolitan New York Synod, where it will be kept in the departing pastor's file.*

SAMPLE LETTER: Attestation of Record & Financial Requirements

(Date)

The Rev. Dr. Katrina Foster, Bishop
Metropolitan New York Synod, ELCA
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1620
New York, NY 10115

Dear Bishop Foster,

This is to attest that Pastor *(name of pastor)*, Secretary *(name)* of *(name of congregation)* and *(name of Conference Dean)*, have examined the parish register and have established that the parish records are in good order.

I also wish to inform you that Pastor *(name of pastor)* is under no financial indebtedness to the congregation, nor the congregation to Pastor *(name of pastor)*.

OR

I also wish to inform you that the congregation is under no financial indebtedness to Pastor *(name of pastor)*. Pastor *(name of pastor)* has a financial obligation to *(name of congregation)*. It has been mutually agreed by the congregation council and Pastor *(name of pastor)* that the debt will be repaid in the following manner: *(details here)*

Sincerely,

(Secretary of Congregation Signature)

(Conference Dean Signature)



Metropolitan New York Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Community Assessment Probe

Congregation/Ministry Site Name: _____

Congregation/Ministry Site Address: _____

Conduct a Community Assessment Probe

Two members of the Transition Team or the Council make two separate appointments, with two local town officials. In our experience, two of the following persons are best: a local school principal, a local chief of police, a local town mayor or supervisor, a council member, or the leader of the local chamber of commerce.

You are calling to ask for an appointment because you are from a local church and, as you are in the process of searching for a new pastor, you want to learn about the greatest needs in your community. You would like 15 minutes of the person's time.

Two of you go to the meeting, and at least one of you takes notes. During the conversation, you should ask the following questions:

- In your experience, what two or three significant aspects should we know about our community?
- Whom do you see working on those issues?
- Do you have any concerns about our community as you look into the future, and if so, what are they?
- What could our church do to help improve the quality of life in our community?
- When we call a new pastor to our church, could we bring them in to meet you?

Immediately following the conversation, do the following:

- Write and mail a handwritten note thanking the official for their time and input.
- Write up your notes of the conversation and review them with your partner in order to determine if you both heard the same information.
- After you have conducted both conversations, provide a verbal update to the congregation on the following Sunday, and make your written notes available to the congregation, and especially for the MSP.

Things for the new pastor to consider and address:

- What things in this community are not the way they should be, and how can the new pastor help with the congregation/ministry to make them right?
- What needs does the new pastor need to address in order for the community to be/become a better place in which to live?



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