

Working Guidelines Call Procedure for Clergy

Closure

Your pastor has just resigned. What do you do? Generally...

The Council receives a written resignation and determines with the pastor a time frame for the final Sunday and last working day.

The Congregation President contacts the synod office with a probable transition time frame to initiate plans for interim ministry and closure process, and to set a meeting with the synod liaison for an exit interview and a brief introduction to the call process.

The resignation and transition information is shared with the congregation, often via a letter from the pastor sent to all members.

The Council oversees the planning of a farewell event.

Transition Time

Your pastor is gone. What needs to be done now?

In consultation with the synod liaison, the Council selects the type of Interim Pastor the congregation needs. Interim Pastors are appointed by the Bishop in consultation with the Council. Please see the ELCA's Model Constitution, Chapter 9, paragraphs 6 and 7 (also located in Part III of the Southeastern Iowa Synod's Call Process materials).

The Council works closely with the Interim Pastor on addressing ministry needs and keeps the congregation informed of all the steps in the process. Some needs are ongoing during the interim; some needs may be covered by members of the congregation instead of the Interim Pastor. Some needs are particular to this time of transition: to help members grieve the loss of their rostered leader and gain perspective on the chapter that has just ended, to gather feelings and ideas of members and the community about the congregation in this time of change, to provide opportunities for sharing and focusing hopes and aspirations for the future, to move to a state of readiness for a new chapter in the life of the congregation supported by the leadership of a new pastor. Congregations address these needs in a variety of ways.

Select a Call Committee according to the constitutional provisions of your congregation.

Self-Study and Interviewing (the work of the Call Committee)

Call Committee Chairperson (or another convenor) sets meeting date with synod liaison for Call Committee Training.

After the training, work on completing Congregational Mission Profile. The completed document is brought to the Congregation Council for approval and then sent to the synod office.

Determine call committee procedures, provisions for confidentiality, nominations, etc. Inform synod liaison whether the committee has decided to interview one name at a time or more than one name at a time. If the call committee chooses to interview a person hoping to receive their first call, please review current synodical material concerning the *First Call Theological Education* program given to you by your synod liaison.

Study and discuss each "Availability for Call Form" received from the synod. Determine the format and agenda for interviewing the candidate(s).

Schedule and conduct the interview(s). At a subsequent meeting, after prayerful discussion, select one candidate. Call synod liaison to inform of decision. Inform candidate(s) of decision (and time frame for further steps). Nominees should be released through both personal contact and a formal letter.

Working Guidelines Call Procedure (continued)

Election

The Call Committee has decided on one candidate. Now what?

The Call Committee presents information on candidate to Congregation Council. The council may arrange subsequently to meet the candidate.

The Congregation Council acts on the recommendation of the Call Committee by following constitutional provisions for convening a congregational meeting. The council also appoints people to determine compensation, benefits, and related details in consultation with the synod liaison and candidate so that this can be presented at the meeting.

Together the Call Committee and the council should plan how to present candidate to the congregation, including information shared in written vehicles and speaking to the motion at the congregational meeting itself. If possible between the time when the council has met and the meeting is set, arrange an informal opportunity for the whole congregation to meet the candidate.

The congregational call meeting may be conducted by the congregation president or by an appointee of the Bishop. The congregation president informs the synod liaison of the meeting date, and the appropriate call forms are sent to the congregation.

After the Congregational Meeting:

The council president should immediately call the candidate to inform that person of the vote, and the council president should contact the synod office to inform them of the vote.

The Letter of Call and Definition of Compensation should be completed, signed in the appropriate places, and forwarded to the synod office.

When the Bishop receives the call documents, he/she will sign the Letter of Call and forward the documents to the candidate. The candidate has thirty days in which to respond to the call.

The candidate notifies the president and synod office whether the call has been accepted. If a call is declined, the Call Committee begins interviewing again.

Start-Up

The candidate has accepted the call. What is left to do?

Acknowledge the end of service of the interim pastor (remember that this has been an important ministry and close relationships may have developed).

Plan how the congregation will help the new pastor and his/her family in their move to the community.

Make plans with the new pastor and the synod liaison for the service of installation.

Council appoints someone to represent congregation at installation service. This person will be a part of the service and present letter affirming the call.

Offer assistance to the pastor and his/her family as they adjust to their new life, perhaps by establishing a staff support or mutual ministry committee if one does not currently exist.