



- 5.4. The congregational constitution is reviewed so that compliance is made with all provisions for the announcement of a congregational meeting.
- 5.5. The congregational council president informs the candidate of the council's vote and informs the candidate of the compensation package.
- 5.6. The assistant and candidate are informed of the votes. A date for a congregational call meeting is mutually agreed upon with the assistant.
- 5.7. At this point, the name of the candidate becomes public information.
- 5.8. The congregational council may arrange for a time for the candidate to meet the entire congregation prior to the congregational meeting.

✔ Step Six: Congregational Call Meeting

- 6.1. The meeting is chaired by the congregational council president and attended by the Assistant to the Bishop.
- 6.2. A printed biographical profile of the candidate should be distributed during the meeting. Members and the chair of the Call Committee are present to answer questions. The compensation package is then presented by the congregational council president. A majority vote by the congregation is needed to pass the recommendation for compensation.
- 6.3. Following an explanation by the president of the congregational council the process for extending a call per the congregational constitution, the congregational council will seek a 2/3rd vote of those present for the recommended candidate. There will be a separate vote for the compensation package; this vote will require a majority for approval. Results of the vote should be announced at the meeting by the congregational council president.
- 6.4. Following the votes, the completed *Letter of Call* is given to the Assistant to the Bishop for the bishop's signature. It is then forwarded to the candidate by the bishop's office.
- 6.5. The congregational council president then informs the candidate of the congregation's decisions.



✔ Step Seven: Call Meeting Follow-Up

- 7.1. The candidate has up to 30 days to accept or decline the call of the congregation.
- 7.2. The Council and the assistant are notified by the candidate of the decision. Assuming an affirmative decision, dates are immediately determined for relocation and installation.
- 7.3. The called pastor, congregational council president, and assistant coordinate details for the installation, which is usually held on the first available Sunday of the new pastor's ministry within the congregation.
- 7.4. In the event the call is declined, the assistant will provide guidance on returning to the call process.

✔ Step Eight: Three-Month Follow-Up

- 8.1. The assistant will meet with the pastor for a 3-month conversation, commencing from the date of installation as pastor of the congregation.
- 8.2. The assistant will establish a time for an 18-month ministry review at the time the call is accepted for the purpose to review both the pastoral and congregational ministry.
- 8.3. If the congregation does not have a Mutual Ministry Committee, the Office of the Bishop recommends that the call committee, in collaboration with the pastor, becomes the newly-formed Mutual Ministry Committee. This committee serves as the Mutual Ministry Committee for a period of two years. This is not the Personnel Committee and does not provide evaluative information for annual staff reviews and/or compensation adjustments.
- 8.4. The Assistant to the Bishop, together with the congregational council and Mutual Ministry Committee will review with the pastor synodical opportunities and requests for attendance at various events such as the synod assembly, conference meetings, first-call pastoral education and annual leadership retreats. The assistant also reviews with the pastor *Expectations for Pastors Called to the Northwestern Ohio Synod*, which includes such items as extended stay of at least three years for each call and other particulars related to their ministry with the Northwestern Ohio Synod.
- 8.5. The Call Committee completes and returns the *Call Process Evaluation*.

CALLING AND HIRING: Employees in the secular world are "hired." Pastors of Christian congregations are "Called" to serve God in a ministry setting. Because pastors receive their Call first and primarily from God, through the moving of the Holy Spirit in their discernment process, in it not appropriate to use secular or corporate terms related to hiring when referring to the pastor's Call to ministry in the congregation.

CONGREGATIONAL CALL PROCESS

Northwestern Ohio Synod ELCA



*One synod, comprised of 188 mission outposts,
serving to make Christ known in the congregations,
in the communities, and in the world.*



Northwestern Ohio Synod ELCA Congregational Call Process

July 2002

To the Congregation:

When your pastor resigns contact the deployed Assistant to the Bishop assigned to your congregation as soon as possible. The assistant will want to initiate the process outlined below.

✔ Step One: Assistant to the Bishop and Congregational Council

Initial discussion once the vacancy is known:

- 1.1. An exit interview should be conducted with the departing pastor to address the current and past pastoral and congregational ministry. In addition, the interview should include conversation regarding appropriate closure and appreciation, to be celebrated within the congregation, for the pastor's ministry. During this interview the pastor and the congregational council president should sign a *Covenant of Separation*.
- 1.2. This *Congregational Call Process* document should be reviewed with the congregational council.
- 1.3. **During Step One, the following should occur:**
 - a) The assistant and congregational council president will determine what arrangements should be made for an interim ministry during the vacancy.
 - b) An appropriate climate should be established for beginning the call process for a new pastor. Agreement should be reached regarding mutual congregational support, as well as congregational support with prayer for pastors, congregations of the synod and the Office of the Bishop.
 - c) Suggestions are made by the assistant regarding organization of a Call Committee, its purpose and function, as well as its membership. It is recommended the Call Committee be comprised of 6 to 8 members with representation from the congregational council and other groups representative of the congregation. A liaison that is a member of the Call Committee and the congregational council is important to maintain the communication necessary between the council and the Call Committee during the call process.
 - d) The *Congregational Mission Strategy* is introduced, and if necessary, updated. Questions regarding content and completion of the strategy, including timetable when strategy is due, are discussed. The strategy is typically completed by the congregational council, in concert with the congregation and submitted to the assistant within four weeks.



✔ Step Two: Assistant to the Bishop and Call Committee

- 2.1. The *Congregational Profile* is introduced. Questions regarding content and completion of the profile, including timetable when the profile is due, are discussed. The profile is typically completed and submitted to the assistant within 2 months.

The Office of the Bishop recommends that prayerful, purposeful deliberation should be taken with the profile to ensure it is reflective of the congregation's mission and ministry needs.

- 2.2. After submission of the profile, the Assistant to the Bishop will develop a list of candidates. The determination of the list of candidates is developed with the Bishop, the Call Committee and the assistant. The assistant will review the process whereby the congregation may suggest prospective candidates.
- 2.3. The assistant will review the purpose and responsibilities of the Call Committee, including its communication with the congregation and the congregational council.
- 2.4. Confidentiality of the call process is explained.

✔ Step Three: Assistant to the Bishop and Call Committee

- 3.1. After receipt and clarification of the profile, the assistant will submit profiles of candidates for interviews, which could include those suggested by the congregation. If the profile is that of a new seminary graduate, only that profile will be given to the Call Committee.
- 3.2. The process for interviews is reviewed, including a review of what expenses will be covered by the congregation for those being interviewed. Typically, a congregation should cover travel expenses including transportation, meals and accommodations. Mileage for travel by car should be reimbursed at the IRS reimbursable rate.
- 3.3. The Call Committee is responsible for the following:
 - a) Determining a schedule for the interviews and authorizing the Call Committee chair to contact the candidates;
 - b) Establishing a consistent interview process for all candidates. The process should focus on congregational mission goals and the profile; and
 - c) Providing each candidate (and spouse, if appropriate) with a tour of the church and the community as part of the interview. Since typically, interviews are held in the evening, the Call Committee may wish to share a meal with the candidate before or after the interview.
 - d) Keeping candidates informed of developments in the call process in a timely manner.
- 3.4. An information packet of community and local interest information, including education, recreation, housing and the like should be sent to the candidate well before the interview.
- 3.5. The Call Committee may wish to set up a mock interview with a local or a retired pastor.



✔ Step Four: Call Committee and Interview Process

- 4.1. The goal is to select one candidate, with at least a 2/3rd vote of the Call Committee, for recommendation to the congregational council.
- 4.2. Interviews should be scheduled close together, with focus on the interview process established in *Step Three*. This process should be in a written form so that consistent questions are asked. Provide an opportunity in each interview for the candidate to ask questions of the Call Committee.
- 4.3. Spouse and family vocational and educational needs should be considered, and therefore, it is appropriate to invite the spouse to the interview, if applicable.
- 4.4. If geographic distance is a consideration for the interview, the committee may choose to substitute the personal interview with an interview via telephone conference calling or other web-based interactive video conferencing.
- 4.5. If, following the interview, the committee wishes to visit the pastor's current congregational worship or other settings, great care and discretion are necessary. No interviewing should take place during such a visit. Audio or video tapes, CDs and other media of the candidate's sermons may be requested by the Call Committee.
- 4.6. Following the candidate's interview, the Call Committee may choose to have one or more of the candidates return for a second interview.
- 4.7. Once the 2/3rd vote has been achieved, the pastor's name and profile are forwarded to the congregational council as a recommendation for call. When this occurs, all candidates that have been interviewed are informed by the Call Committee chair that a recommendation has been made by the Call Committee.

✔ Step Five: Congregational Council and Call Process

- 5.1. The congregational council and the Call Committee jointly interview the candidate.
- 5.2. The assistant presents the compensation recommendation to the congregational council president and congregational financial representative (usually the treasurer). The assistant explains the **necessity of understanding the compensation documents and advocacy for the compensation package** by congregational leadership.

With the guidance of the bishop's staff, it is critical that several members of the congregational council understand the compensation package thoroughly and will serve as advocates at this time and in the future for the pastor's compensation.
- 5.3. The congregational council is requested to support the Call Committee's recommendation with, at least, a 2/3rd vote. In addition, a majority vote by the congregational council is required for acceptance of the compensation package.