



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

Minnesota South District

...cultivating leaders intentionally engaged in the mission of God

TRANSITION PLAN for a PASTORAL CHANGE - 2021

Updated 3.31.2021

AT THE BEGINNING

Structuring the Plan: Tasks

The Call Committee members, additional church members, or teams may be assigned the following important transitional tasks:

1. Plan for a grateful and celebrative farewell for the outgoing pastor.
2. Secure a vacancy pastor or intentional interim pastor to provide pastoral services until such time as a new resident pastor is in place. The executive assistant to the district president will provide a list of pastors trained to serve as a vacancy or intentional interim pastor.
3. Coordinate public and private prayers as the congregation seeks its new shepherd. This prayer ministry could include prayer vigils at pivotal points in the process.
4. Coordinate weekly communication updates concerning the transition/call process, remembering that not everyone is in church every Sunday.
5. Complete a thorough self-study of your church, providing a snapshot of its present values and ministries as well as its expectations for a new pastor. The district will supply a Congregational Self-Study, Congregational Checklist, and Congregational Profile for this purpose. Also recommended is an exit-interview with the outgoing pastor, focusing at least on the most pivotal moments in his pastorate and on the current strengths and challenges of the congregation he has served. These resources are invaluable to the district president as he builds a call list and to the incoming new pastor.
6. Plan for an affirming welcome of the new pastor and his family.
7. Intentionally ride alongside the new pastor through his first year of ministry.

Again, the above functions may be filled by members of the Call Committee or by individuals or teams invited to serve.

Starting with the End in Sight: An Effective Transition

At the end of the transition, the effectiveness of the pastoral transition plan will be evaluated based on the following:

- Effectively communicating throughout the process
- Maintaining participation levels in worship and ministries
- Maintaining financial strength
- Holding and further developing lay leadership
- Continuing key ministries and hallmarks of the congregation

- Confidently installing the pastor God has chosen for us
- Effectively orienting and on-boarding the new pastor

PROCESS FOR CALLING A PASTOR FROM THE FIELD (2021)

1. Following the announcement of the pastor's retirement or acceptance of another call, congregational leaders plan for a farewell event recognizing the pastor's years of ministry. A congregational gift is appropriate. An exit interview with the pastor is encouraged.
2. Congregational leaders hold a Pre-Call Meeting with their circuit visitor, the district president, or his representative to learn the process for calling a pastor from the field.
3. With the assistance of the executive assistant to the district president and the circuit visitor, appropriate leaders of the congregation recommend a vacancy pastor or intentional interim pastor to serve the congregation. Vacancy pastors are contracted. Intentional interim pastors are called for one year or more. Sample contracts are available through the district president's office.
4. It is highly recommended that a ministry description be developed for the office of Pastor in the congregation. This is true for Sole or Senior Pastors but especially for Assistant or Associate Pastors; for the sake of regular performance review and healthy team ministry.
5. The congregation decides at a duly called Voters Meeting to call from the field (as opposed to calling from the seminary).
6. The congregation establishes a Call Committee, following its Constitution and Bylaws.
7. The congregation and its leaders bathe the entire call process in prayer at weekend services and scheduled times of prayer.
8. The Call Committee provides the congregation with weekly updates on the call process.
9. For three or four Sundays the Call Committee opens nominations for the position of Pastor or Associate Pastor to congregation members. The congregation must use the nomination form provided by the District at the Pre-Call Meeting. Pastors of other congregations may suggest nominees to the District President; they must also use this form to make nominations. The Nomination Form is provided by the district president's office.
10. During this period, the Call Committee completes the Congregational Self-Study, Checklist, and Congregational Profile required by the district and returns them to the district president's office.
11. The Call Committee closes nominations and sends the completed nomination forms to the district president. The district president will gather background information on those nominated by church members and add other names with background information, reaching about 12 names in total.
12. The circuit visitor delivers to the Call Committee for its review the following background information on all candidates: PIFs (Personal Information Forms) and



- SETs (Self Evaluation Tools). If a pastor is on Candidate Status, an ECS (Explanation of Candidate Status) form will also be included.
13. Please note that the PIF, SET and ECS forms are confidential human resource documents, the property of the Minnesota South District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. At the end of the call process, they are to be collected and shredded.
 14. Via these resources and perhaps through letter surveys and phone calls, the Call Committee narrows the list of candidates to semi-finalists. The Call Committee is assisted by the circuit visitor in this review process.
 15. The Call Committee, assisted by the circuit visitor, may by phone, letter, or online contact, interview the semi-finalists.
 16. When the Call Committee has narrowed the list to one or more finalists, each finalist may be invited for an on-site visit, including an open forum with the congregation. Finalists should not be invited to preach in the calling congregation. Sermons of many pastors are available online or congregations may request a video of a pastor's sermon. Call Committee members may visit the churches of finalists. A brief description of each pastor's background, family, years in ministry, and strengths may be provided for church members.
 17. Prior to the date of the Call Meeting, the congregation may have a designated time of prayer or a Prayer Vigil.
 18. In a duly called Voters Assembly meeting, the Call Committee submits the name(s) of the finalist(s) for call, following the congregation's constitution and bylaws. Most constitutions and bylaws do not allow for nominations from the floor, a practice which is discouraged since the congregation has entrusted the Call Committee with the task of recommending candidates.
 19. Encouraged is a prayer immediately before the election. The circuit visitor or a representative of the district president should be present at the Call Meeting. The congregation votes to extend a call to a specific pastor in the field. It is customary, but not required, following the vote reaching the required majority, to ask for a unanimous vote for the pastor elected. This provides an opportunity for everyone to stand together in the call. The circuit visitor or a representative of the congregation immediately phones the pastor to inform him of his election and call.
 20. The called pastor and perhaps his wife and family may be invited to visit the congregation as he considers the call. Within 2-4 weeks the pastor gives the congregation his decision.
 21. If the call is accepted, THIS IS THE TIME TO BEGIN the MN Statute 604.202 background check for the pastor who has accepted the call. Congregations will now conduct their own background checks. Materials for doing so can be obtained through the district president's office.
 22. The pastor elect cannot be installed until the background check is complete. However, a date may be chosen for the incoming pastor's installation that is 6-8 weeks from the date the background check has been initiated. The circuit visitor assists with plans for the installation. The district president must name the officiant (the person who conducts the Rite of Installation).
 23. If the call is declined, a vacancy pastor continues through a second round or more until a pastor accepts the call. The Call Committee may work with the existing list of names or may request additional names of candidates.

PROCESS FOR CALLING A SEMINARY GRADUATE (2021)

1. Following the announcement of the pastor's retirement or acceptance of another call, congregational leaders plan for a farewell event recognizing the pastor's years of ministry. A congregational gift is appropriate. An exit interview with the outgoing pastor is encouraged and will be helpful for the call process and the new pastor.
2. Congregational leadership holds a Pre-Call Meeting with their circuit visitor, the district president, or his representative. The district president is normally the one who works with the congregation as it calls from the seminary. A congregation's health and ability to support a new pastor are determined before the call process begins.
3. With the assistance of the district president and the circuit visitor, appropriate leaders of the congregation recommend a vacancy pastor or intentional interim pastor to serve the congregation. Vacancy pastors are contracted. Intentional interim pastors are called for one year or more. Sample documents are available through the district president's office.
4. The congregation decides at a duly called Voters Meeting to call from the seminary.
5. In accordance with the congregation's constitution and bylaws, a Call Committee is formed.
6. The Call Committee ensures that the call process is bathed in prayer at weekend services and perhaps in specially scheduled times of prayer.
7. The congregation provides the congregation with regular updates on the call process.
8. Congregations may ask for a candidate from either seminary. The LCMS has two: Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, IN and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO; or designate one seminary exclusively.
9. By December 15 (February 15 at the latest), the Call Committee has all the necessary call documents for requesting a seminary candidate to the district president, including the Congregational Self-study, Checklist, and Profile. Debbie Borchardt, Administrative Assistant to the President, will assist with the completion of these documents. Her contact information: debbie.borchardt@mnsdistrict.org; 952-223-2158.
10. If the congregation is calling an assistant or associate pastor, they have the option to interview candidates. There are additional documents required for this option. The process of scheduling this type of interview starts right after the first of the year.
11. Note that a congregation asking for a sole pastor may not interview the candidate in-person or online.
12. Spring placement of seminary candidates occurs in late April. The combined number of graduates from both seminaries varies, usually with more calls than candidates. Occasionally a few seminary candidates also become available for placement in the winter or at the end of the summer.
13. Congregations may request from the seminaries one or more specific candidates for call. Placement officers at the seminary are Dr. Glenn Nielsen at Concordia Seminary, St Louis, MO (314-505-7211; nielseng@csl.edu) and Dr. Jeff Pulse at

Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, IN (Jeffrey.Pulse@ctsfw.edu; 260-452-2273).

14. Only churches calling an assistant or associate pastor may interview (up to five candidates). Interviews may be conducted by phone or email or through the seminary's Educational Technology Center (Skype). Candidates are not allowed to travel to the calling congregation's site for an interview. Psychological testing as a part of the candidate analysis is not allowed.
 - a. Three additional documents are needed from those congregations which desire to interview seminary candidates: a copy of the Profile, a ministry description, and a thumbnail sketch of the congregation. Upon receipt of these three items, the district president will forward the items, along with his endorsement of the congregation's desire to interview, to the proper seminary(ies).
 - b. These interviews will take place in January or, if necessary, in early February. The congregation interviews all the designated candidates on the same day of their visit to their respective campuses during the times scheduled by the assistants.
 - c. All arrangements and expenses for travel, shuttle service, and lodging are the responsibility of the congregation.
 - d. Following the interviews, the congregation contacts the placement officer(s) either by phone or email to provide them with impressions of their candidates and their intentions for future action.
 - e. The Call Committee then presents its recommendation to the congregational Voters Assembly for formal action. They may submit the following types of requests for a seminary candidate:
 - i. Exclusive Request: this means that your congregation desires only one specific candidate and none other
 - ii. Preferred Request: a first preference, second preference, etc. are identified of the candidates interviewed
 - iii. Open Request: there is no preference regarding the candidates interviewed; willing to accept any candidate assigned, who may or may not have been interviewed
 - f. A congregation may decide not to request any of those interviewed and not to submit a call. Note that submitting an exclusive request significantly increases the risk of not being assigned a candidate, so it is wisest to submit either a preferred request or an open request.
15. The call is processed through the District President's office, from which the congregation secures the proper forms and documents. See Number 9 above. The congregation is encouraged to submit the call to the District President's office by December 15. This earlier submission may be an advantage for placement. Later submissions, even into March, are still accepted.
16. Placement services are usually in the last week of April at the two seminaries. The services are live-streamed on the seminaries' websites. A few days prior to the placement services, the district president will notify the congregation as to whether or not they will be receiving a candidate. Congregations often choose to view the placement service online.
17. Between placement and ordination/installation, the congregation MUST conduct a MN Statute 604.20 (sexual misconduct) background check on the assigned pastor.

The candidate for ordination and installation should not be ordained and installed until the background check had been completed. Materials for completing this background check are supplied by the district president's office.

18. Ordination and Installation must be arranged by working with the district president to assign the Officiant. The congregation, the candidate, and the circuit visitor work together on all other details of this worship service.