



EASTERN SYNOD of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

CALL PROCESS MANUAL

SECTION 3: STARTING THE PROCESS – COUNCIL’S ROLE

- 3A. Introduction**
- 3B. The Congregational Mission Profile**
- 3C. Appointing the Call Committee**
- 3D. Meeting with the Bishop**
- 3E. Appointing the Interim Pastor**

3A. INTRODUCTION

Following the resignation of a pastor, there is an immediate need for an ordered process to keep a sense of stability in the congregation's life and to help people stay focused on the mission they share as God's people in this place. The responsibility for this leadership lies with the Congregational Council.

The transition period will bring extra responsibilities for Council to oversee. These may include:

- oversee and guide the ministry of the congregation during the time between pastoral leadership;
- provide reassurance to the congregation that pastoral ministry tasks will be fulfilled;
- assist the congregation in processing their feelings related to the departure of their pastor;
- provide leadership to assure the continuation of services of worship and to assist those who will lead worship (supply pastors, interim pastor(s), assisting ministers, musicians, and others);
- give support and guidance to those staff persons (office personnel, music personnel, custodial personnel, etc.) who normally function under pastoral oversight (continuation of staff meetings or conversations which help clarify needs, directions and expectations);
- assure continuation of pastoral ministries (hospital visits, other visitations, emergency pastoral response, funerals, weddings, confirmation, baptisms);
- assure confidentiality in regards to sensitive issues which arise during the period of transition;
- be a resource to the next called pastor and assist her/him in the continuation of immediate and special pastoral ministry needs.

3B. THE CONGREGATIONAL MISSION PROFILE

The development of the Congregational Mission Profile (**Appendix 2**) prior to the calling of a new pastor or an associate in ministry is helpful in at least three ways. First, it provides the Call Committee with basic information and a description of leadership needs which will guide their work. Second, the profile will assist the Bishop in recommending candidate(s) to be considered by the Call Committee. Third, it provides a picture of the congregation for the candidates as they consider serving the congregation. Therefore, allow adequate time to thoroughly complete the Congregational Mission Profile.

The purpose of the Congregational Mission Profile is to enable the elected lay leadership of the congregation to:

- review the congregation's life and mission;
- evaluate the congregation's present strengths;
- identify specific areas where the congregation needs to strengthen its ministry;
- specify resources necessary to fulfill the mission of the congregation, including especially mission tasks in the parish community;
- arrive at a current understanding of the mission of the congregation;
- identify the gifts that are most important for the next pastor to possess.

The Congregational Mission Profile has two parts: Part I – Congregational Information, and Part II – Leadership Needs.

Responsibility for completion of the Congregational Mission Profile belongs with the Congregational Council. The Congregational Council may, at its discretion, assign a special committee to complete this task. Completing Part I is mostly a matter of gathering information and statistics.

It is recommended that as many people as possible participate in answering Part II – Leadership Needs. Fuller participation can be achieved by mailing the survey to congregation members, or by having members fill them out before or after worship services. When reporting the results, please *indicate the number of respondents* that checked Top, Middle and Bottom priority in the blanks provided next to each skill. While the time for a comprehensive survey of the membership may lengthen the call process, the benefit of including and listening to many voices from the congregation will bear much good fruit and be well worth the time spent. In the end, however, it is the responsibility of the Council to make a final decision on the six leadership priorities for the congregation.

As you prepare the Congregational Mission Profile, take care to avoid the following two sandtraps!

1. Do not attempt to make the congregation or parish sound better than it is by downplaying financial, property or spiritual problems. Tell it as it is. You may scare off some clergy, but that is better than having a deeply unhappy and disappointed new pastor who feels he/she was sold a bill of goods!
2. Do not make claims you have not fully thought through for example “we want more young people and new members.” To bring new members and young people into the church usually requires a lot of change and planning on the part of the congregation or parish. One of the biggest areas of discontent for clergy arises from unrealistic expectations with little support.

NOTE: If your pastor will be serving in a multiple staff situation, please refer to **Appendix 3, Guidelines for Pastors in Staff Ministries**, for more information.

When these two profiles are completed, copies are mailed to the Synod Office so the Bishop or Bishop’s Representative will have time to study them prior to meeting with Council and, where appropriate, the Call Committee.

A Synod staff person can help you if you need other assistance in completing the profile. In some instances Synod office may be able to match you up with a neighbouring parish who has recently completed the call process in order that they can share their newly acquired expertise!

3C. APPOINTING THE CALL COMMITTEE

It is the responsibility of the Congregational Council to appoint the Call Committee. In a parish arrangement, the responsibility lies with the Parish Council. In some situations the Council may choose to serve as the Call Committee.

When appointing the Call Committee consider the makeup of the congregation, assuring that a diversity of gender, age, and ethnic/racial identity is represented, as well as representation from various segments of the ministry of the congregation, such as Worship, Youth, ELW, Education, Evangelism, etc. It is recommended that the committee be comprised of 6-8 persons including at least 2 members of Council.

Because of additional demands on the chair of the Congregational Council during a pastoral transition, it is recommended that the chair of the Congregational Council not be the chair of the Call Committee.

The Congregational Council needs to give the Call Committee the appropriate parts of this call process manual as well as copies of the completed Congregational Mission Profile, including the Leadership Needs. The Congregational Council also needs to give the committee information concerning the salary and benefit

range that the congregation can consider. Salary and benefit considerations are not matters which are to be negotiated between the candidate and Call Committee. The Call Committee, for example, does not have the authority to commit the congregation to a dollar figure or an extra week of vacation or additional educational leave. The Congregational Council also needs to authorize funding to the Call Committee for its use in carrying out its responsibilities, such as cost of travel, meals and hotel expense for candidates invited to come to interview, or for travel by the committee to hear a candidate preach at some other location.

Prayer is an important activity for both the Call Committee and the entire congregation throughout this process. Call Committee members are encouraged to commit themselves to pray for one another and for the work of the Holy Spirit among them as they seek to discern God's will for their congregation. Special prayer at worship and during other meetings of the congregation is encouraged. When the Call Committee is selected, the names of the members are made public, with request that special prayers be made on their behalf.

3D. MEETING WITH THE BISHOP

Once the completed Congregational Mission Profile is received by the Synod Office, a meeting is held with the Bishop or Bishop's Representative, the Congregational Council and the Call Committee.

The agenda of the meeting shall include the following:

1. Appointment of an interim pastor;
2. Review of the Congregational Mission Profile;
3. Review of the Call Process and the roles of Council and the Call Committee;
4. Develop a list of names for consideration for call.

APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERIM PASTOR

This is fully discussed in the next section of this manual (3e). It is important to note that although the Call Committee may be present at this meeting, the appointment of an interim pastor is solely a Council responsibility.

REVIEW OF THE CONGREGATIONAL MISSION PROFILE

The Bishop or Bishop's Representative will lead a brief review of the Congregational Mission Profile, highlighting considerations in **Part I – Congregational Information**, reviewing the leadership needs as listed in **Part II – Leadership Needs**, and pointing out any areas that may need clarification.

REVIEW OF THE CALL PROCESS AND THE ROLES OF COUNCIL AND THE CALL COMMITTEE

The Bishop or Bishop's Representative will then review the call process. The role of the Council and the role of the Call Committee will be highlighted. The importance of balancing the need for confidentiality and the need for open communication between the Call Committee and Council as well as with the whole congregation will be discussed. It is especially important, in this first meeting, to set aside enough time to raise crucial questions and concerns.

The Bishop or Bishop's Representative will outline how the Synod can be helpful to the congregation in the call process. An attempt will be made to clarify any expectations that the Synod might have of the congregation and what expectations the congregation might have of the Synod.

DEVELOP A LIST OF NAMES FOR CONSIDERATION FOR CALL

Names of potential candidates for call will come from two sources: names provided by members of the Council or the Call Committee, and names provided by Bishop or Bishop's Representative. Let's look at how names can be generated from both of these sources.

(a) Names Provided by the Council or Call Committee

Members of Council and of the Call Committee are invited to submit names for consideration. There are many ways that names can come to the attention of the Council and Call Committee. Individuals may suggest:

- The pastor of a previous congregation where they have been a member.
- A pastor they have met at a church convention.
- A pastor of a congregation where they have worshipped on vacation.
- A previous intern or student from your congregation.
- A pastor recommended to you by a member of the congregation.

Please note that these pastors may be unaware that their names are being suggested and may not be open to call at this time.

(b) Additional Names Suggested by the Bishop or Bishop's Representative

The Bishop or Bishop's Representative will also suggest names at this time. These names will include any pastors who have asked to have their names provided for consideration in this call process. Pastors from outside the synod may have their names suggested upon submission of a completed "Personnel Information for Synod Bishops" through their synod office. The Bishop or Bishop's Representative may also suggest the names of pastors who have the specific leadership needs identified by the Congregational Mission Profile. In this last instance, these pastors may be unaware that their names are being suggested and may not be open to call at this time.

(c) The Consideration of Seminary Graduates

The circumstances of students graduating from seminary place them in a unique category that calls for special consideration. Congregations who wish to consider calling a seminary graduate will be requested to limit themselves to the consideration of graduates until such a time as a call is issued or the list of graduates for consideration has been exhausted.

All of the names suggested will be discussed. Some names may be removed from the list at this time. A list of no more than six names will be agreed upon. After the meeting the Bishop will solicit Availability For Call forms from those who have been identified for further consideration.

It is likely that some of the candidates you are considering at this point will not choose to participate in your call process. There are many reasons for individuals to make such a choice including:

- The Pastor has been in his/her present call a fairly short time.
- Family considerations can play a significant role for some pastors and their availability for call. The age and schooling of children, the spouse's occupation, or care for parents or other family members are all examples.
- Some pastors do not feel comfortable serving in certain settings. A person raised in a rural area may not be a good leader in a city setting, or vice versa, for example. This may also be an issue for other family members.

- The congregation where the pastor presently serves may be in the midst of a major project such as a building program.

The pastor is under no obligation to share reasons with you when they decline to participate. It is important not to take these declinations as rejections!

NOTE: Following this meeting, continuing dialogue with the Bishop’s Office is encouraged and expected. Ongoing contact usually will take place in person or by telephone, ordinarily between the staff advisor appointed by the bishop and the chair of the Call Committee.

3E. APPOINTING THE INTERIM PASTOR

Synods provide for the care of congregations during a time of pastoral vacancy through the appointment of an ordained minister to provide pastoral care on an interim basis. An interim pastor is appointed by the Synod Bishop in consultation with the Congregational Council. Pastoral care is then provided on a contract basis, either through appointment or a term Letter of Call.

Whether your congregation can best be served by an appointed interim pastor or by a called interim pastor will depend in part on the “climate” within your congregation.

A congregation facing the normal range of congregational concerns related to a pastoral transition may be served by an interim pastor without formal training for interim ministry. The Synodical Bishop arranges for the congregation to receive Word and Sacrament leadership during the period prior to the regular calling of a pastor through the appointment of an interim pastor. Usually this is done by a neighbouring pastor on a very part-time basis.

Some congregations will benefit from the leadership of an experienced and trained interim pastor. Situations in which this is particularly appropriate include the transition following a long pastorate, a congregation facing new mission opportunities and/or a changed context for ministry, a transition following the resignation of a pastor related to disciplinary action by the Synod, or a transition marked by distress, discord or upheaval within a congregation. In such situations an interim pastor serves at the very minimum on a half-time basis.

The Bishop or Bishop’s Representative will help you decide what kind of interim ministry is right for you. Sometimes the geographic location of a congregation may limit the choices available for interim ministry.

Part-time Interim Ministry is compensated at the rate of \$20.00 per hour. It is expected that the church council and the interim pastor will negotiate the expected duties and the anticipated number of hours. Duties will include attendance at church council meetings and crisis response. They may also include hospital and or shut-in visitation, confirmation instruction, office hours and so on. Pulpit supply is to be compensated separately, according to the Synod Compensation Schedule. In situations where the interim pastor lives a long way away from the congregation, compensation for driving time will be negotiated separately. A monthly log of hours worked is to be submitted for reimbursement.

Some facts about interim pastors:

- (a) An interim pastor assumes the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor. (**Article VII, Section 8 Model Constitution for Congregations**).
- (b) The interim pastor normally serves the congregation by covenanted agreement.
- (c) Ordinarily, interim pastors cannot be considered for call. An interim pastor may only be considered for call after consultation with the bishop’s office and may not be considered for call at the same time as

other candidates. Interim pastors shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor (**Article VII, Section 8 Model Constitution for Congregations**).

- (d) All interim ministry relationships with an individual congregation, whether by appointment or call, can be terminated on 30 days notice by the interim pastor, the Synod Bishop or the Congregational Council.

For more information see the document “**Guidelines Related to Interim Pastoral Ministry**”. (**Appendix 4**)

You may wish to use the service “**Recognition of an Interim Pastor**” (**Appendix 1b**) as a means of beginning your interim pastor’s ministry. This might take place within the Sunday service or at a Council meeting.