



La Crosse Area Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Thanksgiving at the Conclusion of a Call for a Pastor

(The “Leader” may be an individual or a group of leaders from the congregation taking turns)

Leader: Pastor *(insert name)*, on *(insert call date)*, we of *(insert congregation name)* called you to be pastor in this place: to proclaim God’s word, to baptize and teach, to announce God’s forgiveness, and to preside at the Lord’s Table. With the gospel you have comforted us in times of sickness and trouble, and at the death of our loved ones. Sharing our joys and sorrows, you and your family have been important to our life together in the church of Jesus Christ, in our service to this community, and in God’s mission to the whole world. As you leave this community of faith, we say farewell, and we pray for God’s blessing.

Leader: *A reading from Isaiah:* Thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. *(Isaiah 43:1-3)*

(A presentation of gifts or time of shared memories is appropriate at this point. Once concluded proceed with the following.)

Leader: When you came to *(Insert community name)* we rejoiced to welcome you into the mission we share as the people of God. In this community you have come to know and to share in God’s loving purpose for you and for all creation. God has blessed you in this community, and God has blessed us through you.

Leader: We encourage you to continue to receive and share God’s gifts with *(The whole church or name of future ministry)*, united with us in the body of Christ and the mission we share.

Leader: Let us pray.

Eternal God, we thank you for *(name of Pastor and family members if applicable/appropriate)*. Thank you for the time we have shared with them. As they have been a blessing to us, so now send them forth to be a blessing to others.

Leader: Gracious God, we thank you for the work and witness of *Pastor (insert name)*, who has enriched this congregation and community by sharing his gifts. Now bless and preserve *Pastor (insert name and their family)* at this time of transition. Day by day, guide them and give them what is needed, friends to cheer their way, and a clear vision of that to which you are now calling them. By your Holy Spirit be present in their pilgrimage, that they may travel with the one who is the way, the truth, and the life, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Leader: Now let us formally release Pastor *(Insert Name)* as our pastor.

Pastor: I give thanks for the life we have shared in Christ. I now prepare to release my role and responsibilities as your pastor.

You may proceed in these or similar words and actions:

(Walk to Baptismal Font) I have baptized people in the name of God and gathered many around these waters to give thanks for the gift of baptism. I now release this ministry into your care.

(Walk to Pulpit) I have, to the best of my ability, faithfully preached the word of God in this place, asked you to join me in conversation, and together learned to continue our path as God's children. I now release this ministry into your care.

(Walk to the Altar) I have gathered you around God's table of love and mercy. Never forget, that we are not the hosts at this table, but rather it is Jesus Christ, who always has arms wide open and offers forgiveness, grace, and healing. I now release this ministry into your care.

(Walk out into the center of the congregation) I have shared the highs and lows of life with you. I've been there for births, confirmations, gradations, weddings, and burials. I have visited you in your homes, in hospitals, shared meals, and served the community together. I now release this ministry into your care.

(Walk back to the front) I thank you, people of *(insert congregation name)*, for the love and support shown me *(and my family)* during my ministry among you. Please forgive the times that the times I may have fallen short of our expectations for ministry together and I offer my forgiveness to you for the times you fell short as well. For the ministry we have shared, I give you my thanks.

C: We receive your thankfulness and forgiveness. We offer our forgiveness in return. We are grateful for your time among us. Your influence on our congregation will not leave us at your departure, for you have left a mark on this place.

Bishop *(or representative):* People of God, members of *(insert ministry name)*, do you release Pastor *(insert name)* from service as your pastor?

C: We do, and we give thanks to God for our ministry together.

Bishop: Do you offer your encouragement for their future calling?

C: We do, and may the Holy Spirit your guide.

Bishop: Pastor *(insert name)*, do you recognize and accept the completion of your ministry with *(Insert ministry name)*?

P: I do, and I give thanks to God for our ministry together.

Bishop: Do you offer encouragement for the continued ministry here?

P: I do, may the Holy Spirit continue to move in and through the work of *(insert ministry name)*.

Bishop: On behalf of the La Crosse Area Synod, I give witness to the words spoken here: words of thankfulness and release. We thank you for your service and will hold you in prayer as you continue to follow God's calling in your life (*may insert next call if known*).

Thanksgiving and Sending

Leader: Let us pray.

Almighty God, through your Son Jesus Christ

You gave the holy apostles many gifts and commanded them to feed your flock.

You equip your people with abilities that differ according to the grace given to them,
and you call them to various avenues of service.

We give you thanks for the ministry of Pastor (*insert name*) among the people of God in this place.

You watch over our going out and our coming in:

bless this time of ending and beginning.

You surround your people in every time and place:

keep us close in your love.

You accompany your people in times of joy and times of trial:

prosper all that has been done to your glory in this time together.

Heal and forgive all that has fallen short of your will for us.

Help Pastor (*insert name and those of family if applicable/appropriate*) and all of us
to live with courage and gladness in the future you give to us.

As they have been a blessing to us,
so now send them forth to be a blessing to others,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.