



## **Council Overview of Transition**

### **1. Saying Goodbye**

When a pastor announces that they will be leaving a congregation, it is natural for there to be a time of grief. We believe taking time to say goodbye, give thanks, and hold an appropriate send-off is healthy. Doing this well is important and sets the stage for the next chapter in the life of the congregation.

### **2. Entering into Transition**

- **Interim/Coach/Consultant:** The Bishop's office works to find an interim, coach, or consultant who can walk with the congregation through the transition time including the grieving process. An interim pastor oversees existing ministries and programs, equipping lay leaders for mission and ministry. An interim pastor helps the congregation come to terms with its history, discover a new identity, manage leadership shifts, and renew connections with the synod and the ELCA. Because of the shortage of interim pastors, the congregation may have to utilize supply pastors in the area during the transition time.
- **Visioning:** Work together with your Interim/Coach/Consultant (if you have one) to evaluate your ministries, staffing, and sense of purpose. Together, craft the vision of the congregation around which the new pastor is to be called. Essential in the visioning process is the ability to articulate answers to three central questions:
  - Who are we? (As a congregation what makes us unique, what are our ministries currently, what is our context, etc)
  - Where are we going? (What is God calling us to, what are the ministries we feel called to develop, what outreach do we need to be about?)
  - What kind of leader is most needed given the direction we're headed?
- **Financial Matters:**
  - **Compensation Package:** Calculate and communicate to synod staff what maximum compensation figure you could sustainably afford for a pastor (all inclusive of everything - base, housing, benefits, continuing ed, etc - except for moving expenses). This number needs to be based on last year's actual non-designated giving income (excluding giving to special designated funds, or monies drawn from endowments or savings). It is essential that this maximum number be calculated based on what you can sustainably afford without planning on your current giving income increasing, your expenses decreasing, and without digging into savings, endowments, or designated giving. If this maximum figure is not sustainable based on current giving, you run the risk of the call ending prematurely due to an inability to afford your pastor. This maximum figure helps us to ensure that we're not setting you up with candidates who are not in your ballpark. Potential candidates may come in below the maximum figure. Salary guidelines can be found on our website: [www.ecsw.org](http://www.ecsw.org)

- Special Transition Expenses to Include in Budget:
  - In-person Interviews with Candidate(s): It is the responsibility of the congregation to cover expenses for the candidate(s) and their spouse for these interviews including mileage for driving, flight, hotel, and meals. The Call Committee will determine who among their candidate(s) is invited for these interviews. This expense could vary considerably depending upon how many candidates are invited and how far away they candidate live.
  - Moving Expenses: The congregation is expected to cover the moving expenses for your new pastor. This could vary considerably depending upon the distance of the move. The pastor is responsible for getting 3 bids to ensure that they are getting a competitive rate.

### 3. Developing a Ministry Site Profile

Create a group that will be responsible for writing your congregation's Ministry Site Profile (MSP). This team of 6-9 persons develops your MSP - a document that describes the ministry of the congregation. Members of this team should be a cross-section of the congregation's different demographics: young and old, new and long-time members, people involved with different aspects of ministry, etc. The MSP will be presented to potential candidates as they discern God's calling for the next chapter in ministry. Developing the MSP usually takes about 3-6 months.

### 4. Form a Call Committee

The Call Committee is entrusted with the critical task of discernment and vetting one or more candidates on behalf of the whole congregation. Candidates will not preach or preside for the congregation before the congregation's vote. Ultimately, the congregation's vote on the candidate is a vote of confidence in the work of the Call Committee.

- **Constitution:** Check your congregation's constitution for relevant details about the formation of your Call Committee. Does your constitution say that the Council is to appoint members to serve on this committee? Or that the congregation will elect them at a congregation meeting? In either case, the Council should carefully vet candidates. In the case of an election, we suggest that candidates be determined and invited by Council before they are put on the ballot.
- **Be Selective:** Rather than taking anyone who volunteers for this role, it is essential that you carefully select who will serve on this committee. Oftentimes, council determining a list of people to invite to serve in this role is the best approach. Do not allow bullies or those with personal agendas to serve on this committee. The Call Committee will need to come to a consensus about recommending one candidate to the congregation for a vote; so it is essential that every member be relationally healthy, a good listener, clear communicator, and have at heart the overall ministry of the full congregation.
- **Make Up of Committee:**
  - Aim for a cross-section of the congregation's different demographics: young and old, new and long-time members, people involved with different aspects of ministry, etc. If possible, as their schedule permits, include a youth.
  - Overlap between members of this committee and the MSP committee is helpful.
  - No staff members should be on the call committee. (Unless if there is a multi-pastor staff.)

- We recommend having one member from council on the committee and no more than 2 council members on it. The council president should not be on the call committee.
- **Process:**
  - Pastor Asher will meet with the Call Committee for an Orientation.
  - The Call Committee will receive and review one or more candidate profiles (called Rostered Minister Profiles or RMPs) provided by the synod office, interview candidates, watch videos of candidates' sermons, and contact references. They will then recommend a final candidate to the council and congregation. See the resource [Call Process Summary](#) (available on our website [ecsw.org](http://ecsw.org) under transitions/congregations) for a more detailed overview of this process.

## **5. Calling a New Pastor**

After a candidate is recommended to the council, the council then calls an officially held meeting of the congregation. The congregation is the official body that issues the call to a new pastor. The vote must pass by 2/3. After the vote, there is often a time of preparation for the new pastor. We suggest using this time to make repairs to parsonages or assist with local real estate agents, prepare a book of favorite recreational activities or restaurants, and other ways of welcoming the new pastor. An installation date is set in consultation with the new pastor and the synod office.