

## **PASTORAL TRANSITIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CALL PROCESS**

*July 10, 2017*

### **How long will it take to find a pastor?**

The call process varies in length of time from one congregation to another. It is difficult to complete the call process in less than 6 months and many congregations find that it takes a year or more. The length of the process depends upon such factors as the number of candidates available, the number of candidates interviewed by the call committee, the amount of time utilized by the call committee and candidates for conversation, and the needs of the congregation for preparation for the next pastor.

### **What will the congregation do during this time of transition regarding pastoral leadership?**

In a pastoral vacancy, the office of bishop, in consultation with the Congregation Council, will appoint an interim pastor who will, at a minimum, meet with the Congregation Council each month, provide emergency pastoral care, and make sure the confirmation program continues. The responsibilities of the interim pastor will vary and may range from a few hours a week to full-time, depending on the availability of the interim pastor and the needs of the congregation. A letter of agreement is signed between the council and the pastor that explains exactly what the interim pastor will be doing during this time.

### **What should the congregation do during this time of transition?**

During this time of transition, the congregation's ministry site profile will need to be completed. Engaging members of the congregation in conversation about the hopes and dreams, as well as the practical needs of the congregation, will help in completing that profile. There are workshops to help the congregation discern where God is calling them to be the church in this next phase of ministry. Creating Healthy Congregations offers a series of six workshops. The office of the bishop recommends that members of the congregation participate in at least the first three workshops. This process will also help in completing the ministry site profile. After the ministry site profile is completed, then the congregation discerns who will serve on the call committee. The congregation's constitution will define the make up of the call committee. The call committee is not to be installed until profiles from the office of the bishop are ready to be reviewed.

### **How much information can the call committee share?**

The work of the call committee is to be kept confidential in regard to who they are interviewing, details about the candidates, or even how many candidates they are interviewing. This includes not sharing with family members. Basic statements of the call committee's work can, and should be shared with the congregation throughout

the process, such as “we are ready to interview,” “we are interviewing,” “we are waiting for more profiles,” “we are sharing information with the council.”

**What are the sources of names provided by the office of bishop to the call committee?**

The names of the candidates come from a variety of places, including:

**First Call**

- Recent seminary graduates awaiting their first call.

**Second Call**

- Pastors from the Upper Susquehanna Synod asking to be available for conversation with call committees and having submitted availability for call forms.
- Pastors from other synods who have asked that their “Rostered Minister Profiles” be shared with congregations in the Upper Susquehanna Synod. Candidates from outside the Upper Susquehanna Synod must be given clearance by their synodical bishop.
- Pastors identified by the bishop and bishop’s staff as particularly suited for a congregation.
- Pastors suggested by members of the congregation. These candidates must be cleared by the office of the bishop and should never be approached directly.

**Will there be pastors willing to talk with our call committee?**

The answer is almost always “yes.” In highly specialized situations or in part-time ministry opportunities there may be fewer candidates to consider; however, in general, the Holy Spirit is able to bring gifts and needs together. A pastor often welcomes the opportunity to talk about ministry with a call committee and see what the Spirit has in mind.

**Who is responsible for the expenses related to the call process?**

The congregation is fully responsible for any expenses related to the call process including expenses incurred by candidates and any of the expenses of the call committee.

**Should we follow compensation guidelines?**

Yes. Although the synod’s guidelines are just that—guidelines—no congregation may offer less than the minimum as they call a new pastor. If less than the minimum is being proposed, an agreement will need to be reached with the office of the bishop before candidates are considered. While not every congregation is able to reach or exceed the recommended figures, if the compensation to be offered is below the guidelines, fewer candidates are likely to consider the call. If

considerably less is available, a part-time call or other arrangement should be explored.

**Can we invite the candidates to preach in our congregation on a Sunday morning?**

Candidates should not be invited to preach in a congregation where they are being considered. Call committees should travel to a neutral site, or if it is difficult for a candidate to be away from his/her congregation on a Sunday morning, the committee can travel to the candidate's congregation.

**Should spouses of call committee members travel and visit with the call committee?**

No, this is not recommended since spouses have not been selected to participate in the call process. Committee members need the freedom to interact with complete confidentiality as those chosen to represent the congregation.

**Should there be alternate members of the call committee?**

We do not recommend alternate members; however, if alternates are elected or appointed, they should attend all meetings of the call committee and have voice, but should not vote unless a regular member of the committee finds it necessary to relinquish his or her position.

**What if we have additional questions?**

If at any time during the call process you have questions, concerns, or ideas, please feel free to communicate with the conference dean or the office of the bishop.

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