



Conducting the Interview

The call committee designates a committee member to host the candidate. Be certain that this committee member is on hand well before the candidate's anticipated arrival at the interview location. If the interview is to take place in the church building and if time permits, the host might consider providing a guided tour of the church facilities before the interview. The call committee may also decide to host the candidate at a local restaurant before the interview.

Following brief, informal introductions, a member of the call committee may conduct opening devotions or, prior to his/her arrival, some committees invite the candidate to lead devotions. Following devotions, committee members may again introduce themselves to the candidate, identifying their vocations and roles played in the congregation.

The committee member chosen to direct the interview should then outline for the candidate the anticipated procedure for the interview, indicating the time allotted for the interview, the "question and answer" format, and an invitation to the candidate to ask questions of the call committee.

It is appropriate for the call committee chair to ask the candidate to tell the committee something about himself or herself. The invitation, "Tell us something about yourself," is purposefully general and open-ended. A time limit of five to seven minutes is suggested for this opening self-introduction by the candidate.

The formal questioning with prepared questions now begins, remembering that it is very important that the same questions are asked of each candidate for later comparison. Questions may be assigned to various members of the call committee, thereby assuring that all present actively participate.

If the response from the candidate seems incomplete or unclear, the person asking the question may pose a follow-up question, asking for elaboration, clarification, or examples. The committee should not expect finely polished, textbook-accurate answers to spur-of-the-moment questions. If committee members are not satisfied with the answer, clarification can be requested before the next question is asked.

A committee member may be designated to record candidate responses during the interview, for further scrutiny by the committee. Note-taking should be done as unobtrusively as possible, and, if note-taking is to occur, the committee chair should explain the purpose of the note-taking to the candidate. Some committees might consider recording the interview. Recording should take place only with the consent of the candidate and with assurances of confidentiality.

In formulating questions, carefully avoid ones which can be answered with a response of "yes" or "no." For example, the questioner should not ask, "Do you think you are effective in your ministry to youth?" The candidate will almost surely answer, "Yes." Rather, ask, "Describe how you minister to youth. Give us some examples of how you have worked effectively with youth in your current or former parish."



When the committee has completed its list of pre-selected questions, the committee chair may invite additional questions. Though the call committee is “in charge” of the interview, it is helpful to remember that the interview is intended to be a dialogue and not an inquisition! This is intended to be a “mutual” interview. Invite the candidate to ask questions and provide additional comments during the interview.

The committee member leading the interview is responsible for keeping the interview within the anticipated time period previously established. Prolonged interviews are usually counter-productive. If all is not accomplished in the first interview, a second interview can be scheduled.

In concluding the interview, the candidate may be invited to “answer questions not asked” or make any other comment he or she would like to make. The candidate should be thanked for coming and encouraged to be in phone contact with a designated member of the call committee if there are additional questions which occur to the candidate in the days following the interview.

The call committee should indicate to the candidate the approximate timetable involved in the completion of the congregation’s call procedures. If possible, at the conclusion of the interview, the committee should reimburse the candidate for any expenses incurred, such as travel costs, overnight accommodations, and meals. If the reimbursement cannot occur at the time of the interview, it should be completed within the following week and an appropriate explanation given to the candidate.

While the interview is still fresh in the minds of committee members, it might be useful to reconvene the call committee upon the candidate’s departure for sharing initial impressions. It is important that these shared impressions are recorded for later reference.

After an interview has been completed, both the call committee and the candidate are asked to submit corresponding reports of interview to the synod office. The responses will be helpful in the synod’s work with pastors and congregations in the call process, particularly as experiences and suggestions are shared.