

Call Process Manual – Step 6 – Extending the Call



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Calling Your New Pastor – the Congregational Meeting

The congregation council will set a date for a special congregational call meeting. The meeting will be led by the president of the congregation council. Once the date has been established, the officers should follow the congregation constitution in notifying all eligible voting members of the special meeting.

Please notify the synod office when a date has been set for the congregational vote.

In preparation for the congregational call meeting, the officers should review and have at hand portions of the congregation constitution relative to the calling of a pastor, including the number of voters required for a quorum and the definition of a voting member.

Before the beginning of the meeting, all qualified voters should “sign in.” Open with devotions. Establish that a quorum of members is present. This number is recorded in the minutes. Information concerning the proposed candidate should then be presented. Questions about the proposed candidate may be answered by representatives of the congregation council and call committee.

The vote to call a pastor will be by written (secret) ballot. By consulting the constitution beforehand, the validity of proxy or absentee ballots can be determined. **A two-thirds majority of votes cast is necessary for election.**

Tellers should be appointed by the congregation council president to distribute, collect, and count the ballots. The chief teller should then report the vote outcome to the president of the congregation council, who announces the results to the congregation. Careful minutes must be taken.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the congregation council president should express gratitude to the call committee for its work and assistance in the call process. If an approval to call takes place, the congregation should be informed that the candidate has thirty (30) days to consider the call and will normally notify the congregation of his/her decision within that time.

If the required two-thirds majority vote to call is not met, the congregation council president declares that the candidate has not been called. When possible, the congregation council president and chair of the call committee are advised to meet with the bishop or bishop's representative to discuss the failure to elect and to initiate a renewal of the search process. Other congregation council members and call committee members may be included in this meeting, if desired.

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Preparing the Letter of Call

The official Letter of Call form will be prepared in the synod office and given to the council president for the president's and secretary's signatures.

- If the congregation votes affirmatively, the congregation council prepares the Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor form (see **Resources** below) and forwards it, along with the signed Letter of Call, to the bishop.
- The pastor is notified that the call is forthcoming, and the pastor has thirty (30) days to decide beginning from the time the Letter of Call actually arrives in his/her hands.
- The congregation begins preparation for welcoming the new pastor.
- If the pastor accepts the call, a timetable is established for his/her arrival.

When the official Letter of Call and related forms are completed, they **must be sent to the bishop for review and signature.** (Instructions will be included with the official Letter of Call.) After the bishop signs the forms, they are mailed from the synod office to the pastor for signature.

The candidate's decision to accept or decline the call will be sent to the congregation via the congregation council president. In accepting, the pastor should be asked to indicate the starting date, usually within one or two months. **Any variance will need to be negotiated between the calling congregation and the candidate. The decision regarding the call should be conveyed promptly to the synod office.**

Bidding Farewell to the Interim Pastor

As the interim pastor's ministry in your congregation comes to an end, it is good to offer recognition for the work done during the transition and to express gratitude for your time together. (See **Resources** below for a sample liturgy.)

Resources

- +6A – Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities Form
- +6B – Steps for Completion of Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities Form
- +6C – Sample of Completed Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities Form
- +6D – Sample Letter Following Successful Vote of the Congregation
- +6E – Sample Liturgy for Departure of an Interim Pastor

Note: All resources will be provided by the synod office and are available under Call Process Manual at www.swmnelca.org.