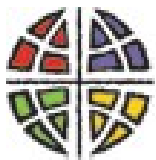


Pastoral Transition

A Guide for Lay Leaders



Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Pastoral Transition ~ A Guide for Lay Leaders

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Welcome

When a congregation loses its pastor, it enters into the "interim period" – the period of time between two regularly-called pastors. The interim period may be difficult for the congregation as it grieves the loss of the previous pastor and enters into a period of uncertainty. However, the interim period can also be a very positive and productive time for the congregation, as it re-examines its reason for existence and seeks to discern God's calling and purpose for it in the future.

The congregational lay leadership may understandably feel it is facing a challenging and unfamiliar new task. It is helpful then to remember that the congregations and other ministries of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (SEPA Synod) "walk together." The congregation whose pastor is leaving is not alone. The Synod has resources to help a congregation at such a time. With a specially-trained intentional interim pastor, and using tools and approaches based on current research and the best methods available, the congregation will be helped to journey through a carefully-designed interim process.

A flowchart of the entire transition process is shown on page 3.

Understanding this Guide

Written to assist a congregation's lay leadership after a pastor resigns, this Guide is one of the resource provided by the Synod for congregations during the interim period.

There are two layers of information in the Guide:

- Introduction and Phase Steps – a brief introductory overview of this Guide and of the four phases of the transition process, followed by a step-by-step description of the details of each phase, and
- Resource Documents – a collection of documents, forms, samples, and additional information that are used in each phase.

Getting Started

It is recommended that when a congregation knows it will be entering a time of pastoral transition, this Guide immediately be printed and made available to the Congregation Council. It is a rich resource to return to again and again throughout the entire interim period, from the first announcement of the pastor's resignation to the welcoming of the new pastor.

Throughout this Guide the additional materials in the Resource Documents are noted as follows:

MORE: • [Two Most Common Mistakes](#) Page 12

On-Screen Reading of the Guide

As an alternative to printing, the Guide may be read on a computer screen. It can be downloaded from the SEPA website:
<http://www.ministrylink.org/for-churches/pastoral-transition/>
For this approach, all of the titles in the "MORE" boxes are links to the named Resource Documents.

Additionally, many navigational tools for moving from page to page are available for either Windows PC or Mac users. However, to gain access to these tools, the Guide must be downloaded and opened on the local computer, rather than read on the website. For Windows PC users, the Guide will download into Adobe Reader. Windows PC users can make sure they have the most current version of Adobe Reader by downloading it free from:

<http://get.adobe.com/reader/?promoid=DINRS>

For Mac users, the Guide will download by default into Mac's Preview software.

Perhaps the quickest and easiest navigational method of all is this one:

WINDOWS PC USERS: After clicking a link to another page in the Guide, to return to the location from which you clicked, use the keyboard shortcut:

ALT+Left Arrow

(Along with **ALT+Right Arrow** it is easy to move back and forth between the two locations.)

FOR MAC USERS: The keyboard shortcuts are:

command+[along with **command+]**

Brief Overview of the Four Phases

Phase One:

After a Pastor Resigns

Phase One of the interim process begins when a pastor resigns or departs for any reason. As a pastor leaves, it is important to find a way to say goodbye and to begin to define appropriate boundaries so that the congregation is able to receive another individual as the pastor.

If you are a congregation president or lay leader, Phase One describes the actions that should be taken by you in consultation with the Synod's Office of the Bishop in order to begin the process of selecting your next pastor. Phase One ends in the selection of a qualified Interim Pastor, as specified in the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations (Section C9.06). In the SEPA Synod, we normally use a specially-trained pastor known as an *Intentional Interim Pastor*.

MORE: • [Importance of Healthy Boundaries](#) Page 13

Phase Two:

Self-Study & Visioning Process, Congregational Profile

Phase Two of the interim process begins with the welcoming of the Interim Pastor. The Intentional Interim Pastor will carry out the work of interim ministry by following a widely-accepted process known as the Five Developmental Tasks for a congregation in transition. The purpose of these tasks is to help the congregation conduct a study of itself and its situation, to develop a Vision of the future mission to which God is calling this congregation, and to discern the type of pastor and the pastoral characteristics needed to lead the congregation to fulfill that Vision. Phase Two concludes with the preparation of a package of material called the Congregational Profile, and its submission to and approval by the Synod's Office of the Bishop.

MORE: • [The Role of the Interim Pastor - Best Practices of Interim Ministry](#) Page 14

Phase Three:

The Call Process

Phase Three of the interim process is the Call Process. The Call Process begins when the Congregational Profile has been approved by the Synod's Office of the Bishop. At this point, the congregation selects a Call Committee. That Call Committee receives the names of possible pastoral candidates in a highly confidential process. After the Call Committee interviews pastoral candidate(s) and hears them preach, it eventually recommends one pastoral candidate to the Council. If the Council agrees, the Council calls a special congregational meeting. Normally, the pastoral candidate leads worship and preaches at a Sunday morning worship service, which is followed by the special congregational meeting as described in the congregation's constitution. If the congregation decides to issue a call to the pastoral candidate, and the pastoral candidate accepts, then he or she becomes the next regularly-called pastor of the congregation.

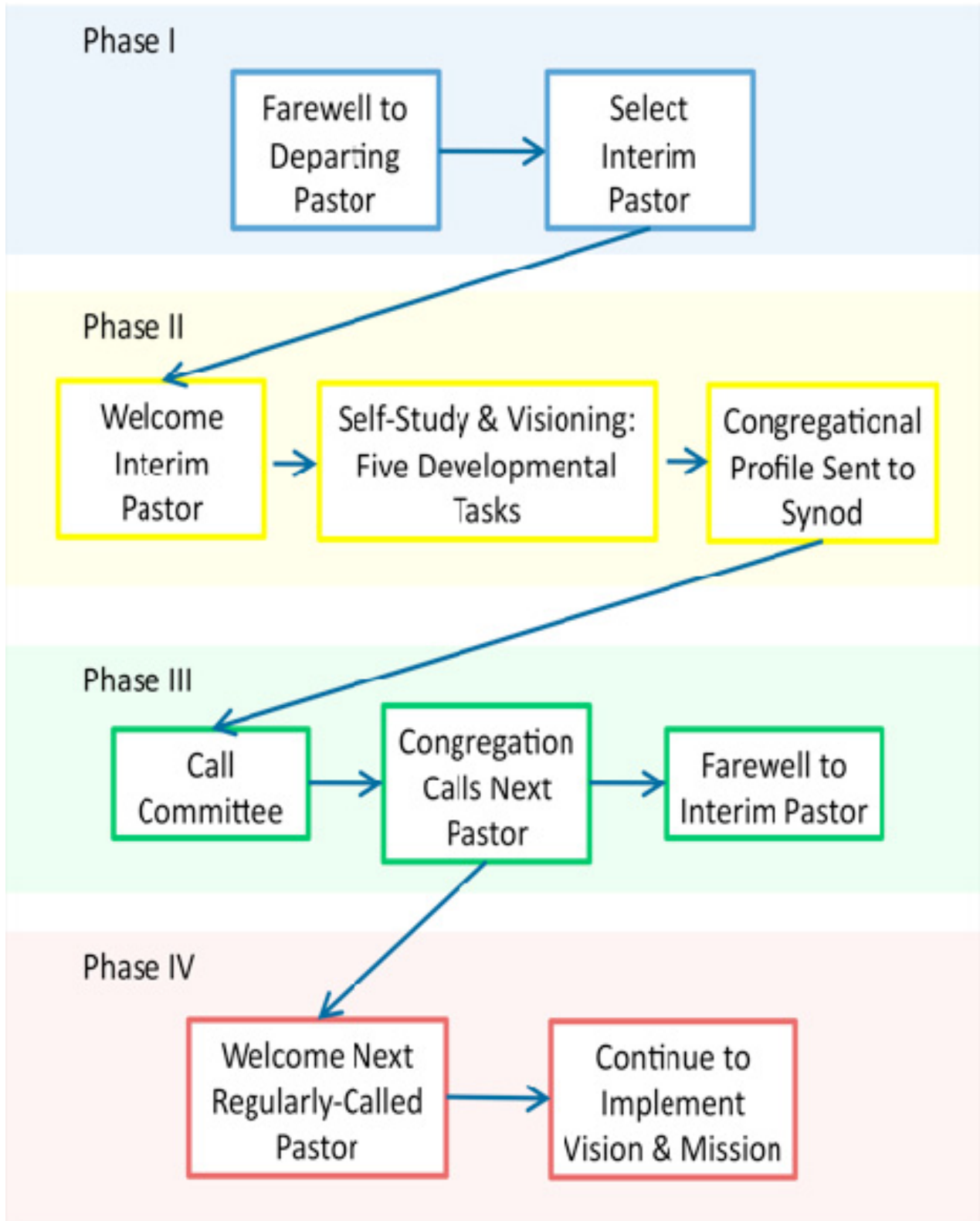
Phase Four:

Implementation with Next Pastor

Phase Four of the interim process is the final phase. Throughout the process the congregation has worked to develop its vision of the future to which God is calling it and has called the pastor it believes will lead it in pursuing this vision. Now the congregation welcomes this new pastor. This new partnership is celebrated with a formal installation service.

Rather than set aside the work of the transition process, it is important for the pastor and congregation to work on implementation together. The arrival of the next pastor is not a time when "things return to normal," but is a continuing part of transition. Throughout the Synod and beyond there are resources for congregations as they continue to live into the future to which God is calling them.

Flowchart of SEPA Pastoral Transition Process



Phase One: After a Pastor Resigns

1. Consultation with Synod when a Pastor Resigns

When a pastor leaves, the congregational leadership will consult with a representative from the Synod's Office of the Bishop about how to proceed. The pastor should put the resignation with effective date in writing to the Congregation Council and copy the Bishop. In many cases, the Congregation Council may hold a special meeting with the Synod Representative.

2. Notifying the Congregation.

After consultation between the congregation's lay leadership and the Synod's Office of the Bishop, the next step is to notify the congregation.

Depending on the situation, there may be a letter from the pastor to the congregation and a letter from the Congregation Council. It is important to observe confidentiality so that all members of the congregation receive the same information at the same time.

MORE: • [Some Thoughts on Letters](#) Page 16
• [Sample Letter to the Congregation](#) Page 17

3. Exit Interview

The departing pastor, the Congregation Council, the Assistant to the Bishop, and the Conference Dean will usually attend the exit interview meeting. The focus of the meeting should be on the proclamation of the Gospel and what the pastor and congregation can learn from each other as they go their separate ways. What has the pastor done well in proclaiming the Gospel? What might the pastor do differently in the future? What has the congregation done well in proclaiming the Gospel? What might the congregation do differently in the future?

MORE: • [Exit Interview](#) Page 18

4. Farewell Celebration

A suitable Farewell Celebration should be planned for the departing pastor. Because a church family is constantly changing, it is important and right

that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. An appropriate part of the celebration is either the Farewell Litany or the Farewell and Godspeed Rite from the Pastoral Care companion volume to ELW.

MORE: • [Litanies for Pastoral Transitions](#) Page 19

5. Receipt Form for Congregational Records and Financial Settlements

At the conclusion of a pastoral ministry, the Congregational Secretary is required to certify that the congregational records have been received in good order from the departing pastor. This requirement is specified in the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations and expected by the Office of the Bishop.

The congregation and pastor must also settle all outstanding financial matters between them. This specifically includes any vacation and/or pension matters. It also includes establishing ownership of any pastoral items that may be on church property and returning any congregational property that may be in the possession of the pastor.

MORE: • [Departure Checklist](#) Page 21

6. Establishing Proper Boundaries with Former Pastor

When a pastor departs, it is the expectation of the Office of the Bishop that the pastor will sever all pastoral connections to the congregation members. Specifically, the expectation is that the pastor will not perform any baptisms, weddings, or funerals, nor will he/she make pastoral visits to those congregation members who are sick or hospitalized. If asked to do so, the pastor is expected to decline. The pastor will not take communion to any congregation members. The pastor is expected to transfer his or her church membership and that of any spouse or family members to another congregation.

The purpose of these expectations is to enable the congregation and its members to establish a

normal and healthy relationship with the next pastor or pastors, including any interim pastors.

MORE: • [Importance of Healthy Boundaries](#) Page 13

7. Procedure for Selection of Interim Pastor

The SEPA Synod makes extensive use of trained specialists in interim ministry, called Intentional Interim Pastors. These pastors have received specialized training in interim ministry and are called by Synod Council to serve in individual congregations as intentional interim pastors. Most of them are full-time pastors, although some may be willing to serve less than full-time.

The Synod invests time and resources in maintaining its staff of trained Intentional Interim Pastors for the benefit of its approximately 160 congregations. The Synod has about 20 to 25 such specialists at any given time, with most of them serving in congregations. The Synod's Office of the Bishop will seek out the Intentional Interim Pastor it considers most suitable for a particular congregation and who can be made available at the time. It will recommend that pastor to the Congregation Council for its consent. When approved, this person will then serve as the congregation's Interim Pastor. In some cases a Bridge Pastor will be identified to meet the pastoral needs of the congregation until a trained Interim Pastor is available.

8. Interim Ministry Costs

The normal policy in the SEPA Synod is for the Intentional Interim Pastor to receive the same total

compensation package as the previous pastor, because this is a budgeted amount already approved by the congregation for pastoral ministry.

In some cases, the compensation of the previous pastor may not be sufficiently within the compensation guidelines of the Synod to serve as the compensation level for the Interim Pastor. In such cases, a Synod Representative will work with the Congregation Council to determine an appropriate level of compensation. Such situations may indicate a need for the congregation to upgrade its long-term compensation in preparation for the Call Process in order to obtain pastoral candidates with the desired level of experience.

MORE: • [SEPA Synod Compensation Guidelines](#) Page 26

9. Letter of Agreement with Interim Pastor

The congregation, the Interim Pastor, and the Office of the Bishop will enter into an agreement for pastoral care and service during the transition period. The Letter of Agreement will include an opportunity for the Congregation Council to indicate the areas of ministry that it considers a high priority for the Interim Pastor. A standard part of this agreement is that the Interim Pastor will not be a candidate for call to the congregation.

MORE: • [Sample Interim Ministry Agreement](#) Page 23
• [Why Can't We Call Our Interim Pastor?](#) Page 25
• [Compensation Forms](#) Page 27

Phase Two: Self-Study & Visioning Process, Congregation Profile

1. The Interim Pastor Arrives

Upon arrival, the Interim Pastor should receive items needed to cover the pastoral ministry of the congregation (such as keys, directories, computer access, etc.). It is important to share information regarding upcoming Pastoral Ministry Commitments such as weddings and baptisms. During the first months the Interim Pastor will work with the congregational leadership and the congregation to explain and plan the self-study and visioning process while clarifying the role of the Interim Pastor. It may be helpful to appoint a Transition Team to help guide the process with the Interim Pastor.

MORE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Litanies for Pastoral Transitions• The Role of the Interim Pastor	Page 19 Page 14
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2. What is Intentional Interim Ministry?

Intentional Interim Ministry is an *intentional* process, guided by the best research available. The goal of Intentional Interim Ministry is to prepare the congregation to select the best possible pastoral candidate. The work of intentional interim ministry is based on Five Developmental Tasks, which are generally accepted as the preferred structure for interim ministry.

However, it may be helpful to point out the two most common mistakes that are often made by congregations, as identified by extensive research:

- Beginning a pastoral search without knowing what you're looking for, and
- Reacting to the previous pastor.

MORE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two Most Common Mistakes	Page 12
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3. The Five Developmental Tasks

In the larger picture, a congregation needs to take time to discern God's mission for this particular congregation. What is God calling this congregation to be or to do? In what direction

should it be headed? The Five Developmental Tasks are really a process or a road map to help a congregation determine God's mission for itself, so it can then choose the pastoral leader who is best suited to accomplish God's mission in that congregation.

The congregational leadership or the Transition Team and the Interim Pastor will work together using various tools to accomplish the Five Developmental Tasks:

- 1) Coming to Terms with History
 - Grieve the end of an era in the history of the congregation
 - Celebrate accomplishments
 - Identify and address unresolved issues
- 2) Examining Leadership and Organizational Needs
 - Examine changing leadership needs
 - Facilitate shifts in lay leadership
 - Develop current and future leaders
- 3) Rethinking Lutheran Linkages
 - Reconnect with ELCA and synodical resources and programs
 - Reflect on Lutheran theology and tradition as it affects mission and ministry
- 4) Developing Identity and Vision
 - Look objectively at congregational strengths and weaknesses
 - Examine the community context for ministry
 - Redefine the purpose and direction of the church
 - Orient towards the future
- 5) Commitment to New Leadership
 - Support the Call Process
 - Prepare for new pastoral leadership
 - Gather resources and organize to facilitate ministry start-up

MORE: • [Background of The Five Developmental Tasks](#) Page 29

4. Preparing the Congregational Profile

The end product of Phase Two is a package of material called the Congregational Profile. Much of the interim process for any congregation is directed toward assembling the information needed for the Congregational Profile, which should reflect the work done on the Five Developmental Tasks. The profile is the congregation's formal notification to the Synod's Office of the Bishop that it wishes to enter the Call Process to select a new pastor.

Preparation of the Congregational Profile

There is a considerable amount of detailed work involved in the preparation of the Congregational Profile. The congregational leadership or the Transition Team may appoint an individual or small committee to work on this task. In whatever way the Council chooses to approach the Congregational Profile, the responsibility for the Profile rests with the Congregation Council.

The 75-Word "Want Ad"

Every congregation throughout the ELCA is expected to submit a 14-page computerized Ministry Site Profile (MSP) in order to enter the Call Process for a new pastor. There is a 75-word summary in the Ministry Site Profile which is

very important and is sometimes referred to as the congregation's "Want Ad." The Council should take special care in the preparation of this 75-word section, because the information in this section will become widely available by itself, without the rest of the Profile. It should be complete and self-contained and suitable for wide distribution.

MORE: • [Congregational Profile Checklist & Notes](#) Page 30
• [ELCA Ministry Site Profile](#) Page 31

5. Final Review of Congregational Profile by Office of the Bishop

When the Council has completed work on the Congregational Profile, it submits the Profile to the Synod's Office of the Bishop. This submission constitutes a declaration by the congregation that it believes it is ready to enter the Call Process.

However, before the congregation is actually entered into the Call Process, the Office of the Bishop reviews the Congregational Profile. It must make sure that the Profile is complete and accurate. At this point, it may ask questions or offer suggestions for improving the Profile.

After any desired modifications have been made, the congregation officially enters the Call Process of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

Phase Three: The Call Process

1. Selection of a Call Committee and Call Process Option

The Congregation Council is usually responsible for appointing the Call Committee. (It is essential to check the congregation's constitution for requirements, which can vary.) The Call Committee comprises the members who will interview pastoral candidates provided by the Office of the Bishop in order to make a recommendation to the Congregation Council. During this process it is important that confidentiality is maintained. The Call Committee should be installed at a worship service and the congregation should be encouraged to pray for them regularly.

The Congregation Council decides if it wants the Call Committee to receive one name at a time or a group of candidates to interview (Option A or B).

MORE: • [Notes on Confidentiality](#) Page 33
• [The Call Process – Congregation Council Responsibilities](#) Page 35

2. Call Committee Begins Meeting

As the Call Committee begins to meet, it will need to select a chairperson. It is important that the members get comfortable with one another as they gather additional materials to share with a candidate and prepare for the interview process. The Call Committee should clarify with the Congregation Council how potential expenses related to the Call Process (travel, meals, lodging) will be handled.

MORE: • [The Call Process – Call Committee Responsibilities](#) Page 39

3. The Synod Committee of Deans and its Functions

The Synod Committee of Deans works with the rest of the Bishop's Staff to identify appropriate candidates for congregations in the Call Process using Rostered Leader Profiles, submitted by pastors, and Congregation Profiles. Potential candidates are given the opportunity to review the Congregational Profile before their names and

profiles are presented to the Call Committee by an Assistant to the Bishop.

4. Interview Process

After the names of candidates are received, the Call Committee starts the interview process. All first interviews should take place within 30 days of receiving the profile. The Call Committee is expected to interview each candidate they receive.

MORE: • [The Call Process – Call Committee Responsibilities](#) Page 39

5. Call Committee Recommendation to Council

When the Call Committee decides to recommend a candidate to the Council, it prepares a written statement of the reasons for its decision. While there are many factors which lead to the decision, the statement should articulate the most important and include how the candidate complements the mission and vision articulated in Phase Two and reflected in the Congregation Profile

6. Council and Candidate Interview Each Other

Before acting on the recommendation of the Call Committee, the Congregation Council will interview the candidate, which also provides the candidate an opportunity to gain insight into the congregation. The chair of the Call Committee will introduce the recommended candidate to the Congregation Council. Only duly elected and appointed members of the Congregation Council may participate in the interview with the candidate. The Council shall use the same information provided to the Call Committee by the Office of the Bishop and the written recommendation of the Call Committee. After the Congregation Council has met with the candidate, either the Council or the candidate may meet with the Call Committee for further prayer and discussion.

MORE: • [The Call Process – Congregation Council Responsibilities](#) Page 35

7. Council Recommendation to Congregation

When the Congregation Council decides to recommend a candidate to the congregation, a letter is sent to announce when the congregation and the candidate will meet for prayer and discussion, and the date and time of a Special Congregation Meeting when the congregation will decide whether or not to call the candidate. This meeting must be called in accordance with the congregation's constitution, which typically requires two weeks written notice to members.

To prepare for the meeting between the candidate and congregation, Council provides members with a written statement of the reasons for their decision and a brief biographical sketch, prepared with the candidate's input. The Executive Committee meets with the candidate to prepare a formal Letter of Call and to finalize a compensation package, which are also a part of the Congregation Meeting.

MORE: • [SEPA Synod Compensation Guidelines](#) Page 26

8. The Call Meeting (Special Congregational Meeting)

The Congregation Meeting typically follows worship in which the candidate preaches and presides. If there is more than one worship service, it is suggested that a combined worship service be held. If this is not feasible, separate Congregational meetings are held and the results of the vote for each meeting shall not be released until the vote of the final meeting is counted.

Congregation and the candidate gather for worship and the candidate preaches and presides. When the worship service has concluded, the candidate shall be escorted to a place which is not immediately adjacent to the worship space. The Meeting is presided over by a representative of the Bishop.

MORE: • [Format for Call Meeting](#) Page 43

9. Conclusion of Congregation-Interim Pastor Partnership

The congregation and the Interim Pastor will begin to conclude their partnership after the new pastor has been formally selected. The date of conclusion shall be determined jointly by the congregation, Interim Pastor, and Office of the Bishop. It can be helpful if the partnership concludes between two and four weeks before the beginning of the next pastor's ministry. Once again a farewell celebration is appropriate and the Departure Checklist should be used. There may be situations in which the Interim Pastor is needed to begin ministry with another congregation before the next pastor has been called. In this case the Office of the Bishop will identify a Bridge Pastor to meet the pastoral needs of the congregation until the arrival of the next pastor.

MORE: • [Litanies for Pastoral Transitions](#) Page 19
• [Departure Checklist](#) Page 21
• [Congregational Leadership's Evaluation of Transition Process and Interim Pastor](#) Page 44

Phase Four: Implementation with Next Pastor

This section is under development to help pastors and congregations more fully make use of the work done in the transition process.

1. Welcome Next Pastor

There are a number of tasks to address, particularly if the new pastor is moving from a distance. The Call Committee can be helpful to the pastor (and family) as they acclimate to the community. Upon arrival the pastor should receive items needed to cover the pastoral ministry of the congregation (such as keys, directories, computer access, etc.). It is important to share information regarding upcoming pastoral ministry commitments such as weddings and baptisms. While a formal Installation Service will be held in the future, a Litany of Welcome can be used on the first Sunday.

MORE: • [Litanies for Pastoral Transitions](#) Page 19

2. Arrange and Plan for Installation Service

The newly called pastor contacts the Office of the Bishop to schedule a Service of Installation with the Bishop or an Assistant to the Bishop. A packet of materials is available to plan this service.

MORE: • [Installation Service Guidelines](#) Page 47

3. Sharing the Work and Vision of the Transition Process with the Next Pastor

Over the first three months, as the pastor is getting to know the congregation members, it is important for the pastor to be introduced to the work the congregation did throughout the transition period. The congregational leadership (or Transition

Team) should schedule a series of meetings with the pastor to review the materials developed and the process experienced in Phase Two. The completed Congregational Leadership Evaluations should be discussed. The pastor is encouraged to schedule a meeting with the former Interim Pastor.

4. Role of Former Interim

The former Intentional Interim Pastor can be a valuable resource to the new pastor and congregation due to his/her specific knowledge and experience of the vision developed. It is, however, essential that the former Interim Pastor maintain healthy boundaries – not serving in a pastoral role, but as a consultant only at the invitation of the new pastor.

MORE: • [Importance of Healthy Boundaries](#) Page 13

5. Develop Plan for Continued Implementation of Vision

After a 3 to 5 month entry period, the pastor and congregational leadership are encouraged to review where things are in relationship to the vision the congregation has articulated. What is going well? Where do energies need to be focused? What has changed? Where are there shortfalls? Using these conversations, the pastor and lay leadership can develop a specific, intentional plan to move forward with implementing the vision of the congregation.

6. Constant Transition

While we refer to the transition process ending, congregations are always in transition – reviewing and discerning. Throughout the Synod and beyond there are resources for congregations as they continue to envision the future toward which God is calling them.

*Resource Documents
for the
Introduction*

Two Most Common Mistakes

1. Single Most Common Mistake – Beginning a Pastoral Search Without Knowing What You're Looking For

It may seem odd, but many congregations want to immediately begin a search for a new pastor by interviewing pastoral candidates, without any real idea of what they are looking for.

The reason for this approach is emotional, which is why it is misguided. The loss of a pastor leaves members feeling that "something is missing." What is missing is – obviously – a pastor, so the emotional response is to begin immediately to look for pastoral candidates to fill the missing gap. Very little attention is paid to the grief process that may be still affecting members, to the needs of the congregation, or to what God might have in mind for the congregation.

Preferred Process

The preferred approach is to conduct a pastoral search by taking steps in a logical order:

- A. Come to terms with who you are as a congregation, without the previous pastor;
- B. Determine a Vision for the future – What is God calling you to be or do?
- C. Decide on the pastoral characteristics that are needed to accomplish that Vision.
- D. Then, enter the Call Process to interview suitable candidates.

2. Second Most Common Mistake – Reacting to the Previous Pastor

Research indicates that a second major mistake is to be overly influenced by reactions to the previous pastor. Some congregations go looking for a new pastor who is "just like the previous one." Other congregations may go looking for a new pastor who is "exactly the opposite of the previous one." Neither approach is a good idea.

Importance of Healthy Boundaries

Many congregation members do not understand how a continuing pastoral relationship with the previous pastor (either a departing regularly-called pastor or the Interim Pastor) can have a negative effect on the next pastor and the congregation's relationship with the next pastor. However, a congregation can have only one pastor at a time. When a previous pastor continues to perform pastoral functions, it interferes with next pastor's ability to develop a pastoral relationship with members. Furthermore, any new pastor will necessarily and naturally make changes within the congregation. It may be very difficult for the previous pastor to avoid commentary by word or facial expression on the actions of a new pastor. Such commentary will often be viewed as "interference," whether or not intended as such.

In most cases, the departing pastor understands the need to relinquish any pastoral relationship with members of the congregation previously served. The church council and church leadership should assist the previous pastor and the next pastor in this transition by understanding the need for establishing and maintaining proper boundaries.

Congregation members can assist the transition by not making requests of the previous pastor that create awkward situations, such as asking the previous pastor to officiate at a baptism, wedding, or funeral. The departing pastor can help to clarify the situation by sending a letter to congregation members describing the boundaries that will be maintained.

While some may feel such boundaries are insensitive or even harsh, experience has shown that problems inevitably arise when the congregation and the former pastor continue their pastoral relationship in any way. The involvement of the former pastor after the next pastor has been called undermines and prevents the new relationship from forming. In particular, the trust that is essential to the pastor-congregation relationship cannot fully develop. This, in turn, negatively affects the ability of the congregation and the next pastor to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ.

The Role of the Interim Pastor – Best Practices of Interim Ministry

What will your Intentional Interim Pastor do?

Of course, your Interim Pastor will perform most of the usual duties of a pastor, just like any other pastor.

In addition, each Intentional Interim Pastor uses his or her own procedures to accomplish the Five Developmental Tasks. In general, those procedures include the following steps:

1. **Information Gathering.** The Interim Pastor will spend some time, perhaps 2-3 months, just getting to know the congregation. This familiarization may include interviewing members, reading annual reports or minutes, and obtaining demographic information about the community.
2. **Process Recommendations.** After getting to know the congregation, the Interim Pastor will recommend the process for completing the Five Developmental Tasks. (See page 29 for a discussion of the Five Developmental Tasks.) There are a number of different processes available. The Interim Pastor will recommend a process or processes which seem to be the best fit for the congregation and the skills of the particular Interim Pastor.
3. **Guiding the Interim Process.** The Interim Pastor will play an active role in guiding the Interim Process, in consultation with the Congregation Council.
4. **Assistance with Congregational Profile.** The Interim Pastor will assist the council, as needed, in the preparation of the Congregational Profile. This is the official documentation needed for entering the Call Process of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.
5. **Advice on Process Matters.** After the Congregational Profile has been submitted to the Synod's Office of the Bishop, the Interim Pastor will be available to offer advice on any matters of process or procedure as the call process moves forward. However, the Interim Pastor will not participate in or influence the selection of candidates in any way.
6. **Not Available for Call.** The Interim Pastor will never be available for call as the next regularly-called pastor. This protects the ability of the Interim Pastor to do the tasks of an Interim Pastor properly, without regard to short-range perceptions. It also protects the integrity of the Call Process. It is unfair to other candidates to be compared to an Interim Pastor who has a large advantage by virtue of being already in the congregation.

*Resource Documents
for
Phase One: After a Pastor Resigns*

Some Thoughts on Letters

1. The pastor and the Congregation Council shall observe confidentiality about the pastor's decision to depart until the pastor informs the congregation by letter. Maintaining confidentiality allows all members to receive the same information at the same time. The pastor shall meet with the congregation staff at the same time the pastor's letter is mailed to the congregation.
2. The pastor's letter to the congregation should include the reason(s) and other pertinent information about the decision to depart. Doing so will be very beneficial to both the congregation and the pastor as they begin to experience the dynamics of separation which will result from the ending of their relationship. However, the pastor should not be expected to discuss matters of a personal nature or disclose information pertaining to health concerns.
3. The Congregation Council may also send a letter about the pastor's decision if it feels it is necessary. However, it is recommended that such a letter be sent after the Congregation Council meets with the Assistant to the Bishop and the Dean of Interim Ministry. This will allow the Congregation Council to include information about Intentional Transition Ministry and the communication with the Assistant to the Bishop and the Dean of Interim Ministry.
4. The content of all communications needs to be consistent throughout the time of transition. Copies of all letters should be sent to the Office of the Bishop and the Dean of Interim Ministry.
5. In the event the pastor's call is involuntarily ended, the Congregation Council, with guidance of the Bishop or Assistant to the Bishop and the Dean of Interim Ministry, shall, in writing, inform the congregation and the congregation staff of pertinent information as deemed appropriate. The Pastor shall not participate in the preparation of the letter.
6. The same process described in Paragraph 5 above shall be used when the congregation and the pastor end their relationship by mutual agreement. However, in this situation, the Pastor shall participate in the preparation of the communication.
7. In the situations described above in Paragraphs 5 and 6, it is very important that the communication set forth the reason(s) in a manner which will help both the congregation and pastor to conclude their relationship in a Christ-like manner. Judgmental statements, allegations, differences of opinions, and blaming are not in the best interests of the congregation and the pastor and, therefore, should not be included regardless of the circumstances.

Sample Letter to the Congregation

To Members of _____ Lutheran Church

As you know, our pastor has resigned. This raises questions about what happens next. First, we will continue all normal church services, programs, and events. If necessary we will make arrangements for short-term pastoral services. The Synod's Office of the Bishop uses a carefully designed process to assist us in this time of transition, which is based on the most up-to-date research and techniques available. I want to share with you an outline of this process and share what this means for our life together.

Phase One – After a Pastor Resigns. We are in this phase right now. We are planning how to best say goodbye and celebrate our time and ministry together with Pastor [name]. We will keep you posted as plans unfold. At the same time we are in contact with the Office of the Bishop to identify a specially trained Intentional Interim Pastor to guide us through this transition.

Phase Two – Self-Study and Visioning Process. In order to select our next pastor we will work with the Interim Pastor to conduct a study of our congregation and our situation, to develop a Vision of the future mission to which God is calling this congregation, and to discern the type of pastor and the pastoral characteristics needed to lead the congregation to fulfill that Vision. Phase Two concludes with the preparation of a packet of materials, called the Congregational Profile, to be submitted to and approved by the Synod's Office of the Bishop.

Phase Three – The Call Process. After Phase Two is completed, the Congregation Council will appoint a Call Committee who will interview pastoral candidates and recommend a candidate to the Congregation Council. Finally, a new pastor will be called to serve our congregation through a vote of the congregation at a special meeting.

Phase Four – Implementation. This is when we welcome our new pastor and work toward the Vision of future ministry that we developed during this period of transition.

How long will this take? As soon as possible, the council will agree on an Interim Pastor. This means that from an early stage we will have our own full-time pastor (the Intentional Interim Pastor). The process of developing a Vision for the future and the detailed information needed for the Congregational Profile will take at least eight months. This entire process may take about 12 to 18 months to do properly. In the meantime, we will have the [full-time] services of our own pastor.

We ask the congregation members to keep the Council and the Congregation in your prayers as we embark on this carefully-designed process to search for our next pastor. We are willing to answer any questions you have.

Yours in Christ,
[Congregational President]

Exit Interview

This is for use at a gathering of the departing Pastor, Congregation Council, and Representative(s) of the Bishop. The Synodical Representative(s) will ask the following questions:

Opening Scripture and Prayer

1. (To Council) What would be one word or phrase that would describe your pastor?
2. (To Pastor) What would be one word or phrase that would describe this congregation?
3. (To Pastor and Council) What have been the highlights of your ministry together?
4. (To Pastor and Council) Describe any low points or periods of conflict that you have faced together. What went well and/or what might have been done differently?
5. (To Pastor and Council) Is there anything in your ministry together that you wish you had done differently?
6. (To Pastor and Council) What has been your greatest learning(s)?
7. (To Pastor and Council) What do you believe are the greatest challenges facing this congregation and surrounding community as you move into the future?
8. (To Pastor and Council) What specific ministry areas need to be addressed by the leadership and interim pastor during the upcoming period of transition?
9. (To Pastor and Council) You are invited to share any closing comments or expressions of gratitude with one another at this time.

Closing Prayer and Sharing of the Peace

Litanies for Pastoral Transitions

“A church family is constantly changing. Loved ones come to the end of their lives. Individuals come and go in our church life. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings.”

Worship is at the center of a congregation’s life and so it is an appropriate time to prayerfully note the departure or arrival of a pastor in the life of the community. The Litany of Welcome and the Litany of Farewell can be adapted for the first or last Sunday of either a regularly-called pastor or an Intentional Interim Pastor.

Litany of Welcome

This may be used to begin the worship service on the first Sunday a new pastor begins serving a congregation. With an Intentional Interim Pastor, it helps develop a sense of continuity of pastoral leadership within the congregation. With a newly called pastor, it can provide an opportunity to welcome the pastor prior to the official installation service, which is not usually on the pastor’s first Sunday. This litany can be repeated at all services of the first weekend.

Leader: A church family is constantly changing. Loved ones come to the end of their lives. Individuals come and go in our church life. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we share the time of welcome with Pastor _____, whose time as our [interim] pastor begins now. Pastor _____, in the presence of this congregation, will you commit yourself to this new trust and responsibility, and promise to discharge your duties in harmony with the constitutions of the church?

Pastor: I will and I ask God to help me.

Leader: Will you love, serve, and pray for these people of God, nourishing them with the Word and Holy Sacraments, and lead them forward during this important time of change?

Pastor: I will and I ask God to help me.

Leader: Will you lead this people of God in giving faithful witness to the Word of God and in making known the love of God through loving service among them and in this community?

Pastor: I will and I ask God to help me.

Leader: Almighty God, who has given you the will to do these things, give you the power of his Spirit so that you may perform them with strength and compassion.

Congregation: Amen.

Leader: I ask all of you, now, people of this congregation, will you receive this messenger of Christ, Pastor _____, who continues the work of bringing the Gospel of hope and salvation? Will you regard him/her as a fellow servant of Christ and work with him/her in the ministry of this congregation?

Congregation: We will.

Leader: Will you pray for him/her and honor him/her for his/her work's sake and in all things strive to live together in the peace and unity of Christ?

Congregation: We will.

Leader: By your statements of commitment and the affirmation of this congregation, we welcome you as [interim] pastor of this congregation in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Litany of Farewell

This may be used prior to the benediction on the last Sunday of worship when a pastor's service to a congregation comes to an end. It is important to say goodbye in a way that makes space in the life of the congregation for the next pastor. Depending on the situation, it may be appropriate to use this litany with the rite of Farewell and Godspeed (Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Pastoral Care p. 354) and to include the pastor's family in the farewell. This litany can be repeated at all services of the last weekend.

Leader: A church family is constantly changing. Loved ones come to the end of their lives. Individuals come and go in our church life. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we share a time of farewell with Pastor _____, whose time as our [interim] pastor ends.

Pastor: I thank the congregation of _____ Church, its members and its friends, for the love, kindness, and support shown to me over these last months/years. I ask your understanding and forgiveness for mistakes I have made and for expectations unmet. I am grateful that my leadership has been accepted. With joy I recall the many things we have been able to accomplish together and with sadness the many things we were not able to accomplish together.

Congregation: We receive your thankfulness, and we offer our forgiveness for any failures, and our thanks for all accomplishments. We accept that you now leave us to minister elsewhere. We express our gratitude for your time among us and ask your forgiveness for our shortcomings and sometimes flagging faith. Your influence on our lives will not leave us even though you depart from us.

Pastor: I forgive you your failures and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God and to the Christ we are called to serve.

Leader: Do you the members and friends of _____ Church now release Pastor _____ from the duties of pastor?

Congregation: We do, with the help of God.

Leader: Do you offer your encouragement for Pastor _____'s continuing ministry?

Congregation: We do, with the help of God.

Leader: Do you, Pastor _____, release _____ Church from turning to you or depending upon you?

Pastor: I do, with the help of God.

Leader: Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here at _____ Church?

Pastor: I do, with the help of God.

Leader: Let us pray.

Congregation: God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future which rests in your care. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and our disappointments. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories but now move in new directions, until that time to come when we are completely one with you and with each other, in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Leader: Go now, Pastor _____, surrounded by our love and led by the promises of God, the presence of Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Departure Checklist

Congregation Name and Address		Name	Phone	E-mail
	Departing Pastor			
	Council Secretary			
	Council President			

Pastoral Ministry Commitments

The following commitments were made by the Pastor, prior to his or her resignation, to provide pastoral ministry subsequent to their final day of service. All persons to whom the commitments were made have been informed by the departing Pastor that the commitments listed will be fulfilled by an Interim Pastor or a Pastor designated by the Office of the Bishop.

Date	Commitment	Person(s) Involved	Contact Information

Administrative Matters

The following Congregation Records and Property held by the Pastor has been returned in good condition and vice versa (if not applicable, mark N/A next to the item):

√	Returned to the Congregation
	Congregation Records, including records of Membership, Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals are up to date and in good order
	Staff Personnel Files
	Personal Computer with password and security code
	Bank records, checkbook(s), credit card(s), retail membership card(s), petty cash and records
	Updated signature card(s) for bank and financial accounts
	Keys to church building(s), parsonage, vehicle(s)
	Worship items
	Parsonage: walk through has occurred and any concerns addressed
	Other:

√	Returned to the Pastor
	Vestments, worship supplies, communion kits
	Books, office materials
	Computer files

DEPARTURE CHECKLIST continues on next page . . .

Financial Obligations

Chapter 9, Paragraph C9.08 of the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations sets forth the guidelines for the satisfactory settlement of the respective financial obligations of the congregation and departing pastor to each other. These guidelines notwithstanding, it is recommended that both the departing pastor and the congregation satisfy their respective financial obligations before the final day of the pastor’s ministry.

Financial obligations to the pastor include but are not limited to payment for unused vacation and ministry related expenses. Benefits such as health insurance and pension contributions shall be paid in full as pro-rated by the ELCA Board of Pensions. Outstanding loans to the pastor must also be satisfied. Likewise, if the congregation owes the pastor back compensation, an agreement should be reached to meet that obligation. In the event the congregation has provided funds to the pastor for a mortgage, arrangements shall be made prior to departure by the pastor to satisfy such debt no later than sixty days after the conclusion of the pastor’s final day of service.

All financial obligations of the congregation to the pastor have been satisfied as follows:

Salary	
Housing	
Social Security Allowance	
Payment for Unused Vacation Time	
Ministry Expenses Reimbursement	
Other	
TOTAL Paid to Pastor	
ELCA Pension Contributions	
Health Insurance	
Other Benefits & Taxes	
TOTAL Benefits to be Paid	

All financial obligations of the pastor to the congregation, excluding mortgages, have been satisfied as follows:

Loans, Excluding Mortgages	
Credit Card Balances	
Other (please list)	
TOTAL Paid to Congregation	
Outstanding Mortgages Due the Congregation from the Pastor	

If mortgages or any other financial obligations are not satisfied before the pastor’s departure, please describe the arrangements for repayment:

Signature of Pastor Date

Signature of Congregation Council Secretary Date

Signature of Congregation Council President Date

Sample Interim Ministry Agreement

between

**[Congregation Name] Lutheran Church, [location], PA
and
The Reverend [name]
and
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

For the purpose of providing interim pastoral leadership during a period of rediscovery and adjustment to change, it is agreed that The Rev. [name] will serve as the Intentional Interim Pastor of [Congregation Name] Lutheran Church, [location], Pennsylvania, beginning [date].

The Interim Pastor will serve the congregation full time. The Interim Pastor will work approximately 40-45 hours per week, and will be preaching and leading worship every Sunday. The Interim Pastor's time commitments to the wider church (synodical events, Transitional Ministry Network Consultations, etc.) and time for Continuing Education are a part of service as Interim Pastor.

This Letter of Agreement shall remain in effect until such time as a new pastor is called by the congregation and a mutually agreed upon end date (which is no later than two weeks prior the start date of the new pastor) is set by the Interim Pastor and the Congregation Leadership (executive officers/council), or until it is terminated by mutual negotiation and agreement between the Congregation Leadership (executive officers/council), Interim Pastor, and the Office of the Bishop according to the procedure outlined in C9.05.5 of the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations and the prevailing policy of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod as set forth in the Policy for Compensation and Support of Pastors and Associates in Ministry in Severance Circumstances (1993) and the Protocol for the Negotiated Resignation of a Pastor Serving Under Congregational Call (2002).

The Interim Pastor will:

1. Lead worship and preach
2. Administer the Sacraments
3. Provide special services (marriages, funerals, etc.)
4. Teach and/or provide leadership within the educational program of the congregation
5. Do pastoral calling in the congregation
6. Supervise paid staff
7. Be a consultant and resource to the Congregation Council, committees, organizations, and parish programs
8. Be eligible to serve as a clergy delegate to conference and Synod assemblies
9. [Other responsibilities unique to the congregation may be added here.]

The congregational leadership and the Interim Pastor will work together to assess needs in order to address the following developmental tasks:

1. "Coming to Terms with History" – grieve the end of an era in the history of the congregation, identify and address unresolved issues, celebrate past accomplishments
2. "Examining Leadership and Organizational Needs" – examine changing leadership needs, facilitate shifts in lay leadership, develop current and future leaders
3. "Rethinking Lutheran Linkages" – reconnect with ELCA and Synodical Resources and Programs, reflect on Lutheran theology and tradition as it impacts mission and ministry
4. "Developing Identity and Vision" – look objectively at congregational strengths and weaknesses, examine the community context for ministry, redefine the purpose and direction of the congregation, orient towards the future
5. "Commitment to New Leadership" – support the Call Process, prepare for new pastoral leadership, gather resources and organize to facilitate ministry start-up.

The Interim Pastor will not:

1. Work with the Call Committee of the congregation except at the request of the Office of the Bishop.
2. Under any circumstances be a candidate for Call to the congregation.

The Congregation will:

1. Uphold and support the ministry of the Interim Pastor with prayer.
2. Attend worship and meetings.
3. Continue financial support for the church and its mission and ministries.
4. Sustain lay leadership and shared ministry.
5. Provide financial support and time for the Interim Pastor to engage in Continuing Education opportunities.
6. Provide an evaluation of the Interim Pastor's service to the Synod office. The Synod will provide the format on which to base this evaluation.
7. Compensate the Interim Pastor as agreed to on Compensation Form.

Congregation President _____ Date _____

Congregation Secretary _____ Date _____

Synodical Representative _____ Date _____

Interim Pastor _____ Date _____

Why Can't We Call Our Interim Pastor?

Thoughts from the article "Why shouldn't we consider our Interim Minister as a candidate for the permanent position?" (Adapted from Interim Ministry. Rhode Island Conference, U.C.C.)

Maybe God's Spirit has someone even more suitable in mind!

The Interim has an unfair advantage over other persons who might be interested in the vacancy. This raises a question of fairness to all prospective candidates.

While the Interim may be favorable to most members, some may have developed some dislikes. This raises the concern about a built-in resistance right from the start.

If the Interim is considered alongside other candidates (Option B) and then not chosen, this could cause hurt and also a "Lame Duck" conclusion of the Interim's pastorate.

The essential tasks that need to be addressed during an interim period may not get the attention that they really need. For example, calling the Interim might interfere with doing the necessary grief work regarding the loss of the former pastor. Also, an Interim Pastor may need to do some things in the interim period that he/she would not do if anticipating the role as "settled pastor."

Such a practice could put in motion the idea that Interim Ministry is just a stepping stone in the placement process.

The Interim Pastor is a member of a network of people who have mutually agreed to this principle. To accept such a call could be perceived as the Interim going against his/her word.

SEPA Synod Compensation Guidelines

The “SEPA Synod Compensation Guidelines,” a manual to assist congregations in establishing a fair and equitable compensation package for pastors, may be downloaded from the [SEPA website](#).

If you are unable to click on the link to the SEPA website, you may copy the following address into your web browser: <http://www.ministrylink.org/for-churches/compensation/>

Although pastors in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) understand their work as a call from God and a mandate to serve, it is also expected to be their livelihood. While pastors in the ELCA do not expect to afford a lavish lifestyle, they are neither asked nor expected to take a vow of poverty. It should be the goal of congregations to provide compensation to their pastor commensurate to similar professionals with graduate school preparation in their community.

As pastors are expected to care for members of the church, part of the ministry of the laity includes care for the needs of the pastor who serves them. It is recommended that the Mutual Ministry Committee, or another designated group responsible for care for the congregation and the rostered leaders, make recommendations for the annual adjustment of compensation packages to the finance committee and Congregation Council.

The SEPA Synod Compensation Guidelines manual attempts to be a resource to assist congregations and rostered leaders in conducting an annual review and determining a compensation package; pension and other benefits; agreements relative to time off for continuing education, vacation, holidays, and sick leave; and appropriate reimbursement for professional expenses.

Additional Note Regarding Compensation for Interim Pastors

It is the policy of the SEPA Synod that the starting place for developing a compensation package for an Interim Pastor is the total compensation package (salary, housing, benefits, allowances, and reimbursements) of the departing pastor. Often times, for tax purposes, it is helpful to work with each individual pastor to define compensation, which is approved by the Congregation Council before the contract period.

In cases where the compensation package is not in line with the expectations of the Synod and/or needs of the Interim Pastor, negotiations need to take place to either increase the level of compensation or decrease the work expected for the position. Other factors to be considered include different needs in the area of housing and/or health benefits. When adjustments are made it is important for the congregation to also be thinking long-term about how they can change the compensation package to reflect the pastoral candidate they hope to call.

Compensation Forms

Definition of Compensation

A form titled *Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor*, a worksheet for calculating compensation for pastors, may be downloaded from the [ELCA website](#). On the website, look for the form titled:

Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor (2007 form)

DISTRIBUTION: Interim Pastor / Congregation / Office of the Bishop

An accompanying document, which gives the steps to complete the form, may also be downloaded. Look for the document titled:

Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor (2006 steps for completion of form)

If you are unable to click on the link above to the ELCA website, you may copy the following address into your web browser:

<https://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Secretary/Congregation-Administration/Official-Guidelines.aspx>

Pension and Benefits

When a pastor has a change in call, Portico Benefit Services, previously called ELCA Board of Pensions, needs to be notified. *Change of Call Report - For Pastors* is available under the forms tab on the [Portico website](#).

DISTRIBUTION: Interim Pastor / Congregation / ELCA Board of Pensions Service Center

If you are unable to click on the link in the previous paragraph to the ELCA Board of Pensions website, you may copy the following address into your web browser:

<https://www.elcabop.org/forms.aspx>

Resource Documents
for
Phase Two: Self-Study & Visioning Process,
Congregation Profile

The Five Developmental Tasks

Background

Over the past decades, research has identified five "Developmental Tasks" that need to be addressed by all congregations in transition. The research is not unique to Lutheranism or even to Christianity. Indeed, the research has been applied to Jewish congregations going through a transition to a new rabbi. Modified versions have been applied to secular searches for new leadership. Our own Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourages its congregations to work intentionally on these Five Developmental Tasks under the leadership of trained specialists who are called Intentional Interim Pastors.

These Five Developmental Tasks are not new in the ELCA. Predecessor church bodies including the ALC and LCA encouraged congregations to undertake similar tasks at a time of pastoral transition, often referred to by terms such as a "Congregational Self-Study."

However, since the 1990s, the SEPA Synod has recognized the value of trained pastoral leadership for a congregation going through this process. The transitional process comes at a highly-charged emotional time for a congregation, when it is reacting to the loss of its previous pastor. It is often difficult for a congregation to accomplish such a Congregational Self-Study on its own, without an on-site leader. The Synod prefers that an on-site pastoral leader be someone who has received specialized training in the emotional dynamics and requirements of a pastoral leadership transition. A pastor who has completed such specialized training is called an Intentional Interim Pastor.

The Five Developmental Tasks

1. Coming to Terms with History
 - Grieve the end of an era in the history of the congregation
 - Celebrate accomplishments
 - Identify and address unresolved issues
2. Examining Leadership and Organizational Needs
 - Examine changing leadership needs
 - Facilitate shifts in lay leadership
 - Develop current and future leaders
3. Rethinking Lutheran Linkages
 - Reconnect with ELCA and synodical resources and programs
 - Reflect on Lutheran theology and tradition as it affects mission and ministry
4. Developing Identity and Vision
 - Look objectively at congregational strengths and weaknesses
 - Examine the community context for ministry
 - Redefine the purpose and direction of the church
 - Orient towards the future
5. Commitment to New Leadership
 - Support the Call Process
 - Prepare for new pastoral leadership
 - Gather resources and organize to facilitate ministry start-up

Congregational Profile: Checklist and Notes

The following items should be included in the package of materials referred to as the Congregational Profile:

	Ministry Site Profile – the 14-page computerized form used by all synods of the ELCA for congregations needing a pastor.
	Brief History of Congregation
	Demographic Information from MissionInsite website
	Budget and Actual Financial Figures for last year, Budget for this year
	Mission Statement of the Congregation
	Job description of the pastor's job
	Choice of Option A (One Candidate at a Time) or Option B (Multiple Candidates)
	Audit Certification

Optional:

	A cover page, which may include a picture of the church building or depicting a ministry of the congregation
	Any "Vision" or "Pastoral Profile" prepared
	A map indicating location of members relative to the church

It is helpful to think of the Congregational Profile as the congregation's résumé. Just as most job applicants prepare a résumé when they are seeking a job, so ELCA congregations prepare a Congregational Profile when they are seeking a pastor.

Before a pastoral candidate ever interviews at a particular congregation, the candidate is sent a copy of the congregation's Congregational Profile. After examining the Congregational Profile, the candidate then decides whether to allow his or her name to be sent to the Call Committee. This approach avoids the awkward situation where a Call Committee might try to interview a candidate who is not interested in a particular congregation.

It is worth remembering that an interview of a pastoral candidate is always a two-way street. The pastoral candidate is always interviewing the congregation just as much as the congregation is interviewing the candidate.

ELCA Ministry Site Profile

The multi-page Ministry Site Profile is a major component of the package of material called the Congregational Profile, which is completed during Phase Two. An official call process form of the ELCA, the Ministry Site Profile is used by the congregation to describe its ministry and its search for a rostered leader. Congregations must fill out the entire Ministry Site Profile.

The Ministry Site Profile may be downloaded from the [ELCA website](#). During download you will be prompted to create a Ministry Site Profile account. The entire process is described at the website. A sample of the form for review and study prior to downloading the official form is also available there.

If you are unable to click on the link, you may copy the following address into your web browser:

<http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Vocation/Rostered-Leadership/Call-Process/Call-Process-Forms.aspx>

To either complete the Ministry Site Profile or to try the sample form, Formatta Filler, the form tool of the ELCA, will need to be downloaded. Instructions are given on the ELCA website.

Resource Documents
for
Phase Three: The Call Process

Notes on Confidentiality

It is of the utmost importance that the Call Committee and Congregation Council observe complete confidentiality throughout the discharge of their respective responsibilities in the call process. The reason for confidentiality is to protect the candidates, the congregations they are serving, and the congregation engaged in the call process. If a congregation currently being served by a candidate becomes aware that their pastor is seeking another call, their partnership will most likely be compromised in some way.

All candidates and congregations enter the call process with the expectation that their privacy will be respected. Such an expectation is founded on a trust which is a key element of the pastor-congregation partnership. This expectation is not unique to the Church; most persons seeking a position with a new employer do so confidentially. When confidentiality is violated, the willingness and ability of the candidates and the congregation to engage in and maintain a trusting relationship are called into question. Candidates may withdraw from the call process or the Call Committee may find it difficult to trust candidates. The Committee of Deans and the Office of the Bishop may be reluctant to allow the call process to continue until the candidates and/or the Congregation Council can ensure that full confidentiality will be observed.

Confidentiality Protocols which are to be observed are as follows:

1. **The Call Committee** will not share information about any candidate with the exception of the one they recommend to the Congregation Council.
2. **The Congregation Council** will not share information about the candidate recommended by the Call Committee until they decide to present the candidate to the congregation for consideration.
3. **The Congregation** will not seek to gain information about candidates from the Call Committee or the Congregation Council during the interview stage. When the Congregation Council recommends a candidate to the congregation for consideration for call, the congregation is asked to maintain confidentiality until after the call vote is held. This allows the candidate time to inform his/her congregation of the new call.
4. **The Interim Pastor** will not seek or provide any information about any candidate to the Call Committee, Congregation Council, or the congregation. Typically, the Interim Pastor does not know the identity of any candidate. However, the Interim Pastor frequently provides guidance to the Call Committee and the Congregation Council in matters of process. The Interim Pastor also may provide or arrange training for both groups.
5. **Sources of Information About Candidates and the Congregation** will be provided by the Office of the Bishop. Under no circumstances may the Call Committee, Congregation Council, or candidates seek information from any source other than the Office of the Bishop. The primary sources of information are the ELCA Mobility Forms

for Candidates Seeking A New Call, the Congregation Profile completed in Phase Two, and the ELCA Ministry Site Profile. Any need for additional information shall be requested from the Office of the Bishop.

6. **Violations of Confidentiality.** Any member of the Call Committee who violates confidentiality will be removed from the Committee. Any member of the Congregation Council who violates confidentiality will recuse himself/herself from further involvement in the call process. Candidates who violate confidentiality shall be removed from the call process. These steps are necessary to restore confidence in the commitment of the congregation and the candidates to confidentiality.

The Call Process – Congregation Council Responsibilities

Selecting the Call Committee

Typically the Call Committee is appointed by the Congregation Council. The Call Committee is usually comprised of five to seven members that reflect the demographic makeup of the congregation. Not more than one member of the Call Committee should be a member of the Congregation Council (not the president). Be sure to check the constitution and bylaws of the congregation for any local variations.

The Call Committee should represent a cross-section of the congregation and reflect the present demographics of the community served by the congregation. It is suggested that at least one member of the Call Committee should be a person who has joined the congregation in the past four years. Ideally, there should be one teenage member on the Call Committee.

Before selecting the Call Committee members, the Congregation Council should develop and publish the agreed “Criteria for Call Committee Selection.” Each Call Committee member should meet all the criteria.

Suggested criteria:

1. Recognized as someone who lives the godly life revealed in Jesus Christ.
2. Committed to the mission of Christ as evidenced by regular worship and involvement in the ministries of the congregation and/or the larger church.
3. Participated fully in Phase Two of Intentional Transition Ministry and is committed to the direction set forth in Phase Two. This will ensure congruence with the information in the Congregation Profile during the call process and after the next pastor is called.
4. Demonstrated ability to work as part of a committee or team.
5. Can maintain complete confidentiality – sharing the names or data about candidates with anyone, even family members, can seriously compromise the entire process.
6. Able to make a sound judgment.
7. Has not been the source of conflict.
8. Can commit a significant amount of time and talent to the Call Process. It is recommended that members of the Call Committee temporarily relinquish their commitments to other ministries during the period when they are serving on the Call Committee.

Don't ask for volunteers. The Congregation Council will prayerfully appoint members to the Call Committee based on these criteria.

The Call Committee must include individuals who are open to considering each candidate on his or her own merit and who will honor the expectations of the Synod and the law by avoiding any discrimination on the basis of race, age, gender, marital status, or family profile. The Call Committee should never receive direction from the Congregation Council in a manner that

would encourage prejudice for or against any category of persons. If there is any question about this, clarification should be requested from a representative of the Synod.

The Call Committee shall only consider names which have been officially provided by the Office of the Bishop. Recommendations of possible candidates should be directed to the Assistant to the Bishop for evaluation as to suitability and availability. No locally recommended person should be approached unless nominated by the Office of the Bishop. The Interim Pastor is never a candidate for call as pastor.

The names of the Call Committee members should be shared with the congregation. A Rite of Installation should be used and the Call Committee should regularly be included in the prayers of the congregation. The Call Committee will report periodically to the Congregation Council and the congregation on their activity and progress without disclosure of any names or information about candidates under consideration.

Selecting the Call Process Option

The Congregation Council must choose one of the two options below for receiving names of candidates and communicate the decision to the Office of the Bishop.

Option A: The name of only one candidate at a time is provided for consideration. The candidate may interview with only one congregation. After the Call Committee completes its interviews and ministry site visits, it decides whether or not to recommend the candidate to the Congregation Council. If the candidate is not recommended, he or she is released by the Call Committee and another candidate is provided. If a candidate is released, he or she is no longer available for consideration.

Option B: Multiple candidates are provided for consideration. Candidates are permitted to interview with multiple congregations. After the Call Committee completes its interviews and ministry site visits, it recommends one candidate to the Congregation Council. The remaining candidates are released. If no candidate is recommended, another group of candidates is provided. After candidates are released, they are no longer available for consideration.

Interview with the Candidate Recommended by the Call Committee

Before the Interview

During the Call Committee process the Congregation Council continues to pray for the Call Committee and receives periodic updates about its progress. After the Call Committee has recommended a pastoral candidate to the Congregation Council, the Council President contacts the recommended candidate to select a date for the interview with the Congregation Council. A list of Council member names and areas of responsibilities should be sent to the candidate with a confirmation letter.

Biographical information should be distributed to council members in advance. This information must be held in strict confidence, not even shared with family members.

The Council should meet in advance of the interview to discuss the process to be used and prepare questions:

- Every aspect of the congregation's mission priorities and key aspects of the candidate's life, personal devotion, family priorities, time management, etc., should be covered by questions.
- Write open-ended questions for each area, ones that require the candidate to think then respond with what is important to the candidate.
- Questioners should be prepared with a follow-up question, searching for examples of specific results delivered, not merely glowing words and ideas.
- Each question and follow-up should be assigned to a specific person, someone with an interest or background in the area.
- Questions should be reviewed with the Synod Representative or Interim Pastor, asking for suggestions or assistance. If possible schedule a practice interview.

Some additional thoughts to consider:

- Invite the Call Committee to observe and listen to the process as a courtesy and knowing their deep commitment to the candidate and process. Call Committee members should not, however, participate in the interview.
- Introduce the candidate's spouse to the Council as a courtesy prior to the interview then provide hospitality for spouse during the interview
- Practice Hospitality. Be sure to set an "upbeat" and friendly tone. Name tags are helpful. Remember, you are representing your congregation's future.
- This is a mutual interview. *You are evaluating the candidate, but the candidate is also evaluating the congregation.*

The Interview

Open the session with a prayer lead by a member of the Council.

Set the tone at the beginning of the interview, conveying enthusiasm about the congregation and possibilities of the candidate, and establishing a two-way dialogue.

Designate one person to take careful notes on the answers to each question. Everyone should take notes, however, to help in later discussions.

Every person should introduce himself/herself, identifying length of membership and areas of service and leadership.

Listen carefully to the candidate's answers to each question and when necessary ask a follow up question to get more specific information (e.g., examples of results).

Be sure to allow ample time for the candidate to ask questions. Allow different people to respond so that one person is not doing all the talking.

Close with prayer, possibly asking the candidate to lead it.

After closing with prayer the candidate and Call Committee members depart. The Council should immediately meet to discuss the interview and vote on making a recommendation to the congregation. The Council can meet with the Call Committee to better understand its rationale for recommending the candidate, if needed. The candidate and the Office of the Bishop should be informed of the Council decision as soon as possible.

If the Council decides to recommend the candidate to the congregation, notify the Office of the Bishop. A date for a Congregation Meeting should be coordinated with the candidate and the Office of the Bishop so that a deputy can be assigned to conduct the meeting. Be sure to select a date which allows an appropriate amount of time to notify the congregation in accordance with the constitution of the congregation.

The Call Process – Call Committee Responsibilities

Before Interviewing:

Get to really know each other; take time to share background, faith journey, church expectations, and dreams for the congregation.

Select a leader – a person good at leading a process where consensus will be important for a mixture of diverse points of view.

Agree on principles that will guide your work: openness, confidentiality, listening, commitment to the task, lack of prejudice, and support of team decisions.

CRITICAL: Meet with the Congregation Council or Executive Committee to receive direction on mission priorities and complete understanding of the job description and the range decided for the total compensation package. These are the bases for selecting the candidate.

Agree on the process you will use, how to reach decisions, how to conduct the interviews, role of the alternate members.

Schedule and invite candidates for interview. Schedule them in close succession to keep the process flowing.

It can be helpful to send an additional packet of information to each candidate:

- Picture and brief background information of each member of Call Committee
- Pictorial Directory (if available)
- Recent annual report
- Several recent bulletins and newsletters
- Community information: local newspaper, information on cultural and recreational opportunities; things to see and do in the region

Prepare interview questions:

- It is critical that the same questions be asked of each candidate.
- Every aspect of the congregation's mission priorities and key aspects of the candidate's life, personal devotion, family priorities, time management, etc., should be covered by questions.
- Write open-ended questions for each area, ones that require the candidate to think then respond with what is important to the candidate. Focus on the past experiences of the candidate as opposed to what might happen in the future.
- The questioner should be prepared with a follow-up question, searching for examples of specific results delivered, not merely glowing words and ideas.
- Each question and follow-up should be assigned to a specific person, someone with an interest or background in the area.
- Questions should be reviewed with the Synod Representative or Interim Pastor, asking for suggestions or assistance. If possible schedule a practice interview.

Practice Hospitality. Remember, you are representing your congregation's future. You are evaluating the candidate, but the candidate is also evaluating you.

Interviewing

First Interview: The Call Committee shall provide all candidates with an opportunity to meet for an interview. It is important to understand that the candidates and the Call Committee are interviewing each other. Upon completion of the first round of interviews, the Call Committee may release any candidate it has determined is not a suitable match or it may retain all candidates until the completion of a ministry site visit and/or a second interview. Candidates may withdraw from the call process at any time.

After an interview has been scheduled, the Call Committee Chairperson sends a letter confirming the details. The congregation is responsible for reimbursing the candidate for any travel costs.

Sample letter:

Dear Pastor _____,

I am writing to confirm our telephone agreement concerning your meeting with our Call Committee at _____ Lutheran Church. We will be meeting at the church at [time] on [date]. We expect that our conversation will last about two hours. If you have trouble finding us, the best number to reach us at is [phone number]. [If the Candidate is located at a distance include confirmation of travel arrangements and lodging if necessary.]

I have enclosed a brief biography of each Call Committee member as well as newsletters, bulletins, an annual report, and other materials for your review. At your earliest convenience, please send us similar sample materials from your experience so we will be better prepared for the interview. If you need additional information from me, please feel free to call me at [phone number(s)].

At the interview we will be seeking dates from you to attend a service of worship at which you are the principle leader and preacher.

We pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance in our process together.

Yours in Christ,

Call Committee Chairperson

The following is an outline for a first interview, which should also include a tour of the church facilities.

Open the session with a prayer lead by a member of the Call Committee

Set the tone at the beginning of the interview, conveying enthusiasm about the congregation and possibilities of the candidate, and establishing a two-way dialogue.

Designate one person to take careful notes on the answers to each question. Everyone should take notes, however, to help in later discussions.

Every person should introduce himself/herself, identifying length of membership and areas of service and leadership.

Listen carefully to the candidate's answers to each question and when necessary ask a follow up question to get more specific information (e.g., examples of results).

Be sure to allow ample time for the candidate to ask questions. Allow different people to respond so that one person is not doing all the talking.

Close with prayer, possibly asking the candidate to lead it.

After the candidate leaves, the Call Committee should meet immediately (or very soon thereafter) to reach a consensus about the candidate. It is important to have this session and agree in writing on strengths, weaknesses, and fit, prior to interviewing another candidate.

Possible questions to help the Committee evaluate the climate of the candidate visit and responses to the questions asked:

- Does the candidate understand the mission of the church and our congregation's mission priorities?
- Does the candidate have a record of results that would be positive indicators for our mission priorities?
- Does the candidate have leadership skills to equip us to accomplish our mission?
- What are the candidate's weaknesses?

Ministry Site Visits: The purpose of the Ministry Site Visit is to provide the Call Committee with an opportunity to observe a candidate presiding at worship and to hear his/her preaching during Sunday worship. The ministry site is sometimes the congregation being served by the candidate. Ministry Site Visits should occur with the knowledge of the candidate after the initial interview.

Under some circumstances a neutral ministry site may be necessary. Typically, this involves situations in which traveling to the location of the candidate's ministry site is both time and cost prohibitive for the Call Committee. There may be other situations which require the use of a neutral site. The Office of the Bishop is responsible for arranging the neutral site.

1. Call Committees should be discreet when visiting a ministry site. For instance, the Call Committee should not visit as a group. Dividing the Call Committee into groups of two is recommended along with worshipping at different services or on different Sundays.
2. Only members of the Call Committee participate in the Ministry Site Visit. The Congregation Council does not visit ministry sites without the permission of the Office of the Bishop and the candidate.

Second Interview: If necessary, the Call Committee decides which candidate(s) should be offered a second interview and which should be released. Upon completing this round of interviews, the Call Committee must decide to recommend one candidate to the Congregation Council or to release all candidates and request another group of candidates.

As soon as the decision has been made, the Call Committee Chairperson sends a letter to any candidate no longer under consideration for a call.

Sample letter:

Dear Pastor _____,

We sincerely appreciate your willingness to consider a call to our congregation and have been most grateful for the opportunity to meet and worship with you.

We enjoyed learning of your approach to the pastoral ministry and especially appreciate your strengths [provide one or two specific examples, such as “as a preacher and in creating imaginative programming for youths and young adults”].

However, after prayerful consideration, it is the opinion of our committee that at this time your strengths and skills do not meet the needs of our congregation. [You should mention a specific area of concern, such as “We feel we need to call a pastor who has stronger interest in handling administrative details.” or “Given our financial status, we do not feel we can meet the needs you’ve expressed for yourself and your family.” It is probably better to be candid and specific, but use care for the sensitivities of the candidate.)

Please accept our sincere thanks for your time and interest and our regret for any disappointment our decision may cause you. We will continue to keep your candidacy in strict confidence. We pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide you in your ministry and in our search.

Yours in Christ,

Call Committee Chairperson

Cc: The Bishop, Southeastern PA Synod

Format for Call Meeting

The Congregation Council President shall call the Congregation Meeting to order. Prayer should be led by the President or another Council member. Using the attendance information provided by the ushers, the President shall determine if there is a quorum which consists of X% of baptized and confirmed members. (Before the meeting, the congregation's constitution should be consulted for specific requirements.) If a quorum is present, the meeting shall proceed; if not, the meeting shall be adjourned.

If there is a quorum, the President shall introduce and relinquish the floor to the Bishop's Representative, typically referred to as a Deputy. The Deputy shall guide the congregation through the following voting process:

- The congregation shall vote only once. There shall not be a second ballot.
- Discussion shall be limited to the voting process. The sole purpose of the meeting is one of deciding whether or not to call the candidate.
- Each voting member present shall receive a slip of paper and a pen. They shall make their decision by writing either, "yes" or "no" on the paper.
- The slips will be collected by tellers who are selected in advance of the meeting by the Congregation Council (often members of counting teams). The tellers shall proceed to a place outside the worship space where they will count the votes. The count shall then be given to the Deputy who will announce the results to the congregation. At least two-thirds of the votes cast are required to call a pastor.
- If the congregation decides to call the candidate, the candidate is informed and brought back to the worship space. The candidate usually takes additional time to prayerfully consider the call, but may accept the call at that time. At this time, the President or another member of the Congregation Council shall offer prayer and adjourn the meeting.
- If the congregation has decided against calling the candidate, the President shall adjourn the meeting and, with the Deputy, will inform the candidate privately.
- The Deputy will inform the Office of the Bishop of the congregation's decision.

Congregational Leadership's Evaluation of Transition Process and Interim Pastor

Purpose:

- To provide an opportunity for congregation leadership to reflect on the Transition Process while preparing to implement the results of the process with the newly called pastor.
- To provide the Office of the Bishop with feedback about the Interim Pastor, the congregation, and the Transition Process.
- To bring closure to the congregation – Interim Pastor partnership.
- To provide structure to an exit interview between the congregation leadership and the Interim Pastor.

How To Complete The Evaluation

1. Members of the congregational leadership who were involved in guiding the Transition Process (e.g., Congregation Council or Transition Team) should complete this form.
2. The evaluation is to be completed no later than one week before the Interim Pastor completes his/her ministry
3. All parts of the evaluation form are to be completed.
4. Feedback should be honest and constructive, spoken in Christian love. Specific information using examples is more helpful than generalizations. Please read this form in its entirety before beginning the evaluation.
5. Submit the completed forms to the Dean of Interim Ministry.

Name of Transition Pastor: _____ Ministry Dates _____

Congregation & Location: _____

What was your understanding beforehand of what would happen when your previous pastor left and you needed to find another pastor? What did you expect the role of the congregation and Congregation Council to be, and the role of the Interim Pastor to be? Has your understanding changed?

What did you discover about the congregation during the Transition Process?

What were the significant accomplishments of the congregation during the time of transition?

What were the significant shortfalls of the congregation during the time of transition?

How would you describe the work of the Interim Pastor during the Transition Process?

What feedback do you have regarding transition materials, such as the SEPA Synod transition manual "*Pastoral Transition: A Guide for Lay Leaders*"? What would make this resource more useful?

What would it be helpful for the Synod to know about the congregation's experiences during the Transition Process?

What part of the transition work the congregation did are you most looking forward to implementing with the newly-called pastor?

What is the greatest challenge facing the congregation as you move forward?

What else would you like to share about the congregation, the Interim Pastor, or the Transition Process?

Name _____ Date _____

*Resource Documents
for
Phase Four: Implementation*

This section is under development to help pastors and congregations more fully make use of the work done in the transition process.

Installation Service Guidelines

This section is under development.