

Appendix D

Forming Your Call Committee

Once the decision has been made to extend a Call, it is essential to form a search committee deliberately and prudently. The following suggestions may help you in this significant task:

Forming the Committee

1. Determine whether the congregation's constitution, by-laws, and policy manual guide how the search committee will be formed.
2. Depending upon the direction, or lack of specific direction, provided by the congregational documents, consult with the Circuit Visitor, Congregation Mission and Ministry Facilitator, or critical lay leaders in the congregation regarding how such search committees have been established in the past.
3. It is recommended that most of the Call committee members be persons not currently serving on the congregation council. The committee should intentionally reflect the makeup of the congregation regarding gender, age, ethnic/racial identity, and various segments of the congregation's ministry—worship, youth, seniors, school/preschool families, education, evangelism, missions, etc.
4. Questionnaire
You may find it helpful to use a questionnaire when selecting possible Call committee members (see sample below). In addition to helping you ensure the committee reflects your congregation as much as possible, it helps gather information on previous and current involvement in the congregation, perspectives on congregational health, and the gifts needed in your next pastor.

Notably, a questionnaire is also helpful in discovering potential hidden agendas. Be very cautious about members who eagerly volunteer to serve on the Call committee, as they may have ulterior motives that aren't in alignment with seeking God's will for your congregation. You may also want to interview potential Call committee members after receiving questionnaires to further delve into their viewpoints.
5. The committee should include no more than 9 or 10 people.
6. Because of additional demands on the lay president of the congregation council during a pastoral transition, it is recommended that the lay president not be the chair of the Call committee. However, it is a good practice to have the president sit on the committee as an ex officio member and act as a liaison with your governing board or council.
7. Establish to which congregational board or council the search committee is responsible.
8. When forming the committee, decide whether volunteers should be solicited for consideration for committee membership or whether the committee should be constituted by appointment or congregational position.
9. When forming the committee, strive to have individuals who know the congregation well, understand its mission and values, and are well-respected.
10. Define the role of existing staff persons in the search committee process.
11. Use the Calling Process Check List ([Appendix B](#)) to outline what is to be done, processes to follow, budget resources, and a timeline by when the candidate slate is to be presented.
12. Identify whether the committee will present to the congregation
 - a. all names
 - b. only those the committee finds acceptable ranked by preference

- c. only those the committee finds acceptable not ranked by preference
 - d. a single recommendation
13. If the committee chair is not defined by the congregation's constitution or policy manual, decide whether this person is appointed by the appropriate board or council or is chosen by the search committee.
 14. Publicize the committee's first meeting, membership, and general task.
 15. Regularly share with the congregation the status of the search process, inviting congregational members to talk with committee members with any thoughts or questions.

Prayer

Prayer is a critical activity for the Call committee and the entire congregation throughout this process. Call committee members should commit themselves to praying for one another and the work of the Holy Spirit among them as they seek to discern God's will for their congregation. Special prayer at worship and during other meetings of the congregation is encouraged. When the Call committee is selected, the members' names are made public, requesting special prayers be made on their behalf.

Committee Structure

The Committee leaders and roles include:

- Chair - convenes meetings, sets meeting agendas, primary contact with candidates, single point of contact with the District office, oversees the Call process, and keeps it on track.
- Recording Secretary - keeps minutes of Call committee meetings for future reference, may be responsible for final preparation of the Call documents.
- Communications - responsible for written communication between candidates and committee, send copies of correspondence to the District office, may write newsletter articles, notes for bulletins, etc., to keep the congregation informed of the committee's progress.
- Hospitality – manages logistics and volunteers related to meals and activities during meetings, candidate visits, etc.
- Data Analysis – a person or team that leads analysis and findings from the self-study activities, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups.
- Prayer – gathers and manages the Call committee prayer list

Salary and Benefits Matters

The congregation's governing board or council will need to provide the Call committee salary and benefit possibilities that the congregation can offer. Salary and benefit considerations are not negotiated between the candidate and the Call committee. The board or council should authorize funding to the Call committee to carry out its responsibilities. This is discussed under "Call Committee Budget" below.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality in the Call committee discussions should be agreed upon at the first meeting. It is recommended that your committee members sign a covenant that details the need for confidentiality, prayer, and support for one another. Regarding candidates, discussed issues need to be open and forthright among the committee members; however, these discussions should be kept in confidence among the Call committee members.

Confidentiality cannot be overemphasized in the task of calling a pastor. Mention of specific candidates outside the Call committee is inappropriate until the committee is ready to recommend

to the congregation's board or council. It is essential to keep all names and both verbal and written information about prospective candidates within the confines of the committee. This means committee members will need to establish ground rules and boundaries with the congregation at large and with those in their household or place of work.

Call Committee Budget

One of the first tasks of the Call committee is to establish a budget with the congregational board or council. Although some of these expenses are difficult to determine ahead of time accurately, every effort should be made to set aside the needed finances for the Call process. Items to include in the budget:

- Travel/meal expenses for committee members
- Travel/meal expenses for candidate(s)
- Office expenses (i.e., photocopying, data entry, postage, etc.)
- Miscellaneous expenses

Note: Although the moving expenses for your newly called pastor will not be the responsibility of the Call committee, it should be noted to the congregational board or council and your congregation's finance committee that the congregation is responsible for the moving expenses of your new pastor.

Openness vs. Holding Confidence

Reporting regularly to the council and congregation helps keep everyone on the same level of understanding about the process. As noted above, the Call committee must keep all verbal and written information about every candidate strictly confidential. However, **communication is essential! Except for** confidential materials, there is no such thing as too much information.

Some options to be utilized to keep the members of the congregation informed about the Call committee's work and progress include:

- Newsletter articles explaining the Call process to the congregation, with follow-up articles each time another stage in the process is reached.
- Notes in the Sunday bulletin announce that the Call committee is meeting, reporting progress, communicating what will happen next, etc.
- Periodic talks or announcements by a member of the Call committee, even if the report is that there have been no changes since the last word, "Nothing has changed from last week." Remember, there will likely be multiple audiences in your congregation to whom you will need to provide updates at different times, i.e., multiple worship services, those who receive congregational emails and those who don't, etc.

Points to include in communications:

- Description of process
- Status of progress, including what's been done, what you're currently doing, and what happens next
- List of actions taken
- The preferred process for communicating with the members of the Call committee.

Planning a comprehensive communications strategy and consistently communicating to the congregation will deliver many benefits, including:

- The congregation will clearly understand the process, including the roles of the Circuit Visitor, District office, congregation boards or council, Call committee, and congregation.
- Clear identification of the members of the Call committee.
- Congregation members will clearly understand the proper communication process with the Call committee members.

Point of Contact with the District

There must be only one point of contact between the District office/District President and the Call committee. This should be the Call committee chairperson. A single point of contact ensures precise, efficient lines of communication throughout the process.

The Right Question

It is not appropriate for a Call committee to be guided chiefly by these questions: Will the congregation like this pastor? Will it approve of the Call committee's choice of candidates? Will people feel good having this pastor around on Sunday morning? Will this person do for now until a better pastor comes along?

The foremost question for the Call committee always is whether this is the person God desires this congregation to have as its pastor. Human preferences and personalities never come before the mission to which God calls His church. That is why every meeting of the Call committee will include prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the work that is being done.

The Significance of Service on a Call Committee

Many people report that serving on a Call committee turned out to be one of the most important things they ever did as members of the church. It allowed them to experience firsthand how the Holy Spirit works through committed Christians to help the church be faithful to its calling. It allowed them to see how the local church is vitally connected to the whole church. It let them participate in opening a new chapter in the life and ministry of their church as part of the history-long, worldwide Church of Jesus Christ.

Sample Questionnaire for Potential Call Committee Members

Name:

Preferred Email: Preferred Phone:

1. How long have you been a member of this congregation? Which worship service do you usually attend? How many times per month, on average?
2. In what types of church activities/services have you participated? Any previous Call committee experience?
3. What do you think are the three best qualities of this congregation? How would you assess the current health of the congregation?
4. How would you describe this congregation's mission today and for the future? How would you describe the most crucial role of the next pastor and the most important gifts or attributes that person will need?
5. In finding the next pastor, what do you think the primary focus of the Call committee should be?
6. What do you think would be your most important contribution(s) in serving on the Call committee? Any other comments you'd like to add?

In Christ,
(Name)

Senior Pastor Call Committee Chairperson Email:

Mobile:

Call Committee Recruitment Letter

(Date)

Dear [name] –

Greetings in Christ Jesus our Lord!

I'm writing to ask you to prayerfully consider serving on the Call committee for Senior Pastor at Sample Lutheran. Our congregation is embarking on a new season of ministry, and I feel that you could bring much value to the committee as we seek first to discern the Lord's will.

Beyond discerning whom the Lord has determined will be our next Senior Pastor, the Call process brings with it the opportunity to undertake an important self-evaluation period. This will help us to clearly see who we are, where the Lord would have us go and the gifts and characteristics needed by the Senior Pastor who will lead us to that vision. Again, your qualifications, experience, and wisdom would be gifts for the committee in this respect.

The time commitment is somewhat open-ended. I anticipate the minimum timeframe would be a six-month period, but more likely to be nine to twelve months, or potentially longer (as is common based on information from the district office). There will be busier times, such as an approximate three-month period conducting our self-evaluation, as well as less active times as we await and gather names for the Call list and profile information from the district. The commitment will include committee meetings that will take place on an approximately monthly basis (likely not every month), and individual or team work outside of meetings. Phone and online interviews with candidates will also take place, and in-person visits as we get to a short list. We will develop a more specific plan as a first task of the committee.

The top qualifications for a Call committee member are 1) commitment to prayerful, deliberate seeking of God's will, and 2) open-mindedness and objectivity without assumptions as to what His will is. I believe you can bring both. A short questionnaire sent to you via email will help provide some insight into your experience as well as your thoughts on our congregation currently and in the future. Please complete the questionnaire form (a fillable PDF document) and email to me at (email address).

Once your questionnaire is received, along with those of others we are contacting, the committee will be formed with the goal of congregational cross-representation balanced with a manageable number of members. With these goals in mind, along with potential member availability and willingness to serve, not everyone I'm contacting will be asked to serve.

I very much appreciate your considering serving. God's blessings as you seek His will in this capacity. In Christ –

Response Letter to a Person who has Volunteered to be on the Call Committee

(Date)

Dear [name] –

Greetings in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Thank you for expressing interest in serving on the Senior Pastor Call committee at Sample Lutheran. This correspondence provides information regarding formation of the Call committee.

The top qualifications for Call committee members include 1) commitment to the Call process, 2) faithful involvement in the life of the church, 3) commitment to prayerful, deliberate seeking of God’s will, and 4) objectivity and open-mindedness without assumptions as to what His will is. We earnestly seek to clearly hear the Holy Spirit’s “still, small voice” during the process.

In addition, another important aspect of the Call committee mentioned previously is to provide cross-representation from the congregation balanced with a manageable number of committee members. Pursuant to this goal, a short questionnaire will be emailed to you that enables you to provide information about yourself, your experience, thoughts on our congregation currently and in the future, and future needs. Once your questionnaire has been received, along with those from other potential members, the committee will be formed based on the congregational representation and manageability goals described above—not all of those expressing interest will be asked to serve. Please complete the emailed questionnaire form (a fillable PDF document) and email to me at (email address).

The time commitment is somewhat open-ended. I anticipate the minimum timeframe would be a six-month period, but more likely to be nine to twelve months, or potentially longer (as is common based on information from the district office). There will be busier times, such as an approximate three-month period conducting a self-evaluation of where we have been as a church, where we are, where the Lord would have us go, and the gifts and characteristics gifts and characteristics needed by the Senior Pastor who will lead us to that vision.

There will also be less active times as we await and gather names for the Call list and profile information from the district. The commitment will include committee meetings that will take place on an approximately monthly basis (likely not every month), and individual or team work outside of meetings. Phone and online interviews with candidates will also take place, and in-person visits as we get to a short list. We will develop a more specific plan as a first task of the committee.

God’s blessings as you seek His will in this capacity! In Christ –

(Name)

Senior Pastor Call Committee Chairperson Email:

Mobile:

Letter Notifying Those Chosen to Serve on the Call Committee

(Date)

Dear [name] –

Thank you again for considering service on our Senior Pastor Call committee and submitting the questionnaire. I'm very pleased to inform you that you have been selected to be serve on this committee. I'm humbly grateful to the Lord as He is raising up committee members like you, characterized by prayerful diligence in seeking His will, with wisdom and integrity in faithfully working through this process. I am very excited to serve with you as He leads us into the next season of ministry at Sample Lutheran!

Kickoff Meeting

A kickoff meeting will be scheduled for (date). (Congregational Mission and Ministry Facilitator (CMMF) or District President) will join us to share his wisdom, best practices, and Scriptural grounding for the Call process. I will be in contact via email to work through scheduling.

Call Committee Principles

There are a few foundational principles by which we need to function as a Call committee:

1. Diligent Prayer – Please be in consistent, earnest prayer for our church, our committee and that the Lord would lead us through the Call process with His blessing and in His time. We will also spend a significant portion of our meeting times in prayer together.
2. Seeking Discernment – Our loving Father has already has selected our next Senior Pastor, so it is our task to use the gifts He's given us to discern who that is. We'll use His Word, prayer, our intellect, and open hearts to receive what the Spirit wants to reveal to us.
3. Strict Confidentiality – All discussions, deliberations, and meeting matters are to be kept in the strictest confidentiality. We will provide transparent, regular communication to the congregation and church leadership about current status and next steps through "official" channels. Sharing confidential information outside these channels (even with spouses) can lead to misunderstandings, anxiety, distrust, rumors, and more that can impede our work and cause unnecessary stress.
4. Urgency in our work – I thank the Lord you have committed to serve in the midst of your already busy life! With this in mind, we will need to commit that the tasks we have before us are done with urgency and excellence as we intentionally move forward. Making our work a priority as individuals, and as a committee, will help us progress "at all deliberate speed."

Finally, I'm very much looking forward to all of us on the committee growing closer in Christ. And part of that will even include having some fun along the way – yes, that is allowed!

Thanks again for your commitment to serving our Lord and His Church. In Christ –

(Name)

Chairperson, Senior Pastor Call Committee

A Letter Notifying Those not Chosen to Serve on the Call Committee

(Date)

Dear [name] –

Thank you again for expressing interest in serving on the Senior Pastor Call committee and taking the time to complete and submit the questionnaire. The information you provided was very helpful, and I really appreciate your thoughtful responses.

As I mentioned in my initial letter, in seeking to form the committee and provide a cross-section of the congregation, not all of those expressing interest in serving will be asked to serve. Given these goals, your service on the committee will not be required at this time. However, as we go through the Call process, you will have an important role as a member of the congregation in several ways:

- 1) Consistent prayer for the Call committee and our church as we go through this process, and that the Lord's will is clearly revealed in finding our next Senior Pastor.
- 2) As we undertake our self-study period, responding to requests for your thoughts, ideas, etc. as we capture where we've been, where we are, where the Lord would have us go as a church, and the gifts and characteristics of the man He has selected to lead us there.
- 3) Submission of potential candidate names you may have in mind when we reach that period of the process.
- 4) Serving in other capacities related to the Call process as those needs arise, including prayer teams, hospitality teams when it's time for on-site candidate interviews, fellowship opportunities, and more.
- 5) Continuing to be faithful in worship, participation in biblical community as we do life together, serving others at Sample Lutheran and in our local and global community, and being good stewards of the gifts our Lord has given each of us during this interim period.

Sincere thanks again for your willingness to serve our Lord and His Church. In Christ –

(Name)

Chairperson, Senior Pastor Call Committee