

Appendix U

For Pastors: Communicating You Received a Call

What to do When You Receive a Call

Call your current circuit counselor soon after the phone call and tell him that you have received a Call and that the Call documents are coming. Do not announce to your congregation that you have received a Call without the Call documents.

Refrain from telling specific individuals in your congregation about your Call before informing the congregation. They all deserve to hear it from you. Announce it on a Sunday at a typically scheduled service. Tell them that you have two Calls from God: one to serve them and one to serve these other people. You will be considering both of them, praying about it, and welcome their advice and prayers. You will decide and announce it in a few weeks, again on a Sunday.

Send a letter of acknowledgment to the calling congregation. Ask for their prayers and advice also. Inform them, too, of the deadline. Copy both district presidents and both circuit visitors. If possible and you are serious about accepting the Call, arrange a visit to the calling congregation. Don't hesitate to arrange for phone calls with the calling congregation.

Announcing Your Decision

If you need more time than anticipated to make a decision, announce that to your current congregation. Do not delay for more than a week, however. When you have decided, send a letter to the calling congregation with your announcement. Copy both district presidents and both circuit counselors. If there will be a long time between receiving the letter from you and your announcement to your current congregation, ensure the calling congregation, circuit visitor, and district president understand that and know to keep your decision confidential until you announce it to your current congregation.

Announce it to your current congregation on a Sunday. Even if you don't usually make announcements at the beginning of the service, make this one at the beginning. Do not keep your congregation in suspense. If you accept the Call, you must make sure there is no chance it could somehow get to a member of your current congregation before your announcement. The community you currently serve gets the priority. You may also call your contact at the calling congregation and allow them to announce it on Sunday morning.

If You Accept the Call

Leaving a congregation is not easy—don't drag out the process. Communicate that, even though it breaks your heart to go, you think this is the right decision, and God wants you there. Express thankfulness for your time with them and that you will keep them in prayer. Plan to leave quickly after you announce that you have accepted the other Call. Your announcement should include the date of your final Sunday. Two or three weeks is ideal. The longer there is any delay, the longer you endure the situation's awkwardness. They also need to get started with the vacancy and look for a new pastor.

If you live in a parsonage, you should meet with whatever governing board you have as soon as possible and negotiate the terms of your leaving. How long can you stay in the parsonage after your final Sunday? You should list things that need repair and attention during the vacancy. Do your successor a favor and be very detailed, including items that were broken or substandard when you got there, right down to saying that the living room needs to be painted in a neutral tone or the refrigerator isn't big enough for a modern family of four.

If You Decline the Call

Express your gratitude to the calling congregation. Thank them for the care and kindness they showed to you (and your wife) during the calling process. Give the calling congregation a reason for declining. Be gracious and straightforward. If there is a problem, such as low salary, substandard housing, or even obvious trouble in the congregation, they need to hear it clearly to assist them in the next round of their calling process. If it is because of your current family situation or needs, there is no problem with telling them that as well. Whatever it is, explain it so they have an opportunity to address it as needed.