

Call Process Manual

Part C: Congregation calls a rostered leader



Saskatchewan Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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Strengthening Faith Communities for Service

CALL PROCESS MANUAL PART C

Congregational council prepares for the congregational call meeting 3

Congregational council calls a special congregational meeting 3

Congregational meeting..... 4

Congregational council follows up after the congregational call meeting 4

Rostered leader responds to the call..... 5

Congregation welcomes the new rostered leader 5

New rostered leader is installed 5

Evaluation of the call process 6

Nine month ministry review 6

Appendix C1 – Congregational call meeting agenda 7

Appendix C2 – Certification of call procedure 10

Appendix C3 – Evaluation of the call process 11

Appendix C4 – Nine month ministry review 12

Congregational council: Throughout the manual the term “congregational council” is used. In some contexts the role of “congregational council” may be delegated by constitutions or parish agreements to a parish council.

Bishop: When the term “bishop” is used, in some cases the role may be delegated by the bishop to a bishop’s representative.

CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL PREPARES FOR THE CONGREGATIONAL CALL MEETING

Once the primary candidate has been selected by the call committee the congregational council prepares to present the primary candidate to the congregation at a congregational call meeting.

1. Letter of call and Employment agreement are prepared for the congregational meeting.
 - a. Letter of call
Congregational council, following the ELCIC standard letter of call and in consultation with the bishop's office determine the details of the "Letter of Call."
ELCIC Standard Letters of Call can be accessed from the Resource Directory of the Saskatchewan Synod website.
 - b. Employment agreement
Congregational council, following the ELCIC standard Employment agreement, the Saskatchewan Synod Compensation Guidelines and in consultation with the bishop's office determine the details of the "Employment agreement."
ELCIC Standard Employment agreements can be accessed from the Resource Directory of the Saskatchewan Synod website.
Saskatchewan Synod Compensation Guidelines are located on the Resource Directory of the Saskatchewan Synod website.

In the case of new seminary graduates the congregation also includes the cost of the three year First Call program in their budget. The First Call program of the four Western Canadian Synods of the ELCIC is a mandatory continuing education for new rostered leaders.

Upon agreement the details of the Letter of Call and Employment agreement are forwarded to the Synod office for processing prior to the congregational meeting.

2. Potential start date is discussed
Congregational council, in consultation with the primary candidate, determines a potential start date to be presented to the congregation at the congregational call meeting.
3. Potential moving costs are discussed
Congregational council consults with the primary candidate about moving costs. Moving costs are the responsibility of the congregation. Normally the primary candidate provides three quotes from moving companies.

CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL CALLS A SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The congregational council chair calls a special congregational meeting to decide on the call of the primary candidate presented by the call committee.

Model Congregational Constitution Article VII: Section 2. Authority to call a pastor shall rest in the congregation. Such authority to call shall be exercised by not less than a two-thirds majority vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose.

1. Congregational chair coordinates the date and time of the meeting with the bishop or bishop's representative.
The call meeting requires the participation of the bishop or bishop's representative (normally the conference dean). In some cases, the congregational council may consult with the bishop about appointing the congregational chair or another member of the congregation familiar with chairing meetings to act as the bishop's representative.

2. Congregational chair announces the special congregation meeting according to the requirements of the congregational constitution.

If the congregation is part of multi-point parish, the congregations may have separate meetings and a 2/3 majority is required in each or all of the congregations for a call. Alternatively, the parish may decide that a single meeting be held with all congregations in attendance. In that case the parish decides whether all votes are counted together or if the votes for each congregation will be counted separately. In the case of a joint meeting and count, 2/3 majority of the total is required for a call. If votes are counted separately, 2/3 majority in all congregations is required for a call.

3. Congregational council appoints scrutineers for the meeting
Council appoints two scrutineers who are familiar with the church community to assist voting members with the sign in process, to handle any specific questions about eligibility to vote, and to handle the distribution and counting of ballots.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Congregational council chair and the bishop or bishop's representative follow the meeting agenda for the congregational call meeting and ensure all procedures are followed appropriately.

[Appendix C1](#) Congregational meeting procedural guidelines and agenda

CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL FOLLOWS UP AFTER THE CONGREGATIONAL CALL MEETING

Based on the congregational decision the congregational council follows up.

1. If the Call and Employment agreement are approved by the congregation:
 - a. Officers and members of the council and call committee sign the Letter of Call and the Employment agreement.
 - b. The bishop's representative completes the Certification of call procedure report and sends the signed Letter of Call and the signed Employment agreement (with the certification of call procedure report) to the bishop/synod office to countersign, seal and forward to the candidate.
[Appendix C2](#) Certification of call procedure
 - c. Travel expenses (when applicable) for the bishop's representative will be paid by the Synod Office.
 - d. The chair of the congregation council telephones the candidate as soon as possible to share the congregation's decision.
2. If the primary candidate is not endorsed by the congregation the congregational council revisits the call process.
3. If the Letter of Call is approved by the necessary 2/3 majority but the Employment agreement does not receive the needed majority of votes from the congregational meeting, congregational council returns to negotiations with the primary candidate in consultation with the bishop's office.
 - a. If a revised agreement is agreed upon with the primary candidate, church council calls a congregational meeting (unless the congregation has given council authority to renegotiate) to discuss the revised Employment agreement.

- b. If agreement cannot be agreed upon with the primary candidate, the congregational call committee considers other candidates.

ROSTERED LEADER RESPONDS TO THE CALL

The primary candidate acknowledges receipt of a "Letter of Call", and within thirty days of receipt informs the congregation in writing of his/her decision. A copy of all correspondence is to be sent to the bishop. (The candidate may wish to make contact with the congregational chair by phone to give earlier notice of the decision).

If the candidate accepts the call, the council chair notifies the congregation that the call has been accepted. Congregational council confirms plans with the rostered leader and the bishop for a starting date, a service of installation and moving arrangements.

If a rostered leader declines the call, the call committee returns to consider other candidates on the short list.

CONGREGATION WELCOMES THE NEW ROSTERED LEADER

Welcoming a new leader is an exciting time of thanksgiving and hope for a congregation and their rostered leader-elect. At the same time, it can be a difficult time for the rostered leader-elect and family. A congregation needs to be sensitive to the needs of its new rostered leader, from his or her leaving one ministry and moving to a new community to the start-up of a new ministry and settling in.

Consider the following suggestions, and imagine others, to aid in the transition:

- Clean and prepare the rostered leader's office.
- If there is a parsonage, assign a group of people to repair and prepare it for the new rostered leader (appliances working, redecoration completed, grass mowed utilities turned on, etc.).
- If there isn't a parsonage, determine if assistance is needed to secure housing (rent or purchase).
- Offer assistance and support for the new rostered leader's spouse in finding employment, or in settling in generally.
- In dialogue with their new rostered leader may wish to plan welcome events; a potluck or reception after the first service and or the installation; a series of "cottage meetings" in members' homes to help the congregation get to know him or her and their family, etc.

NEW ROSTERED LEADER IS INSTALLED

The service of installation should be held as soon as possible after a new rostered leader's arrival.

- The congregational council, in consultation with the new rostered leader, bishop and worship leadership select the date and time for the installation of the new rostered leader.

Scheduling the installation for a Sunday afternoon or evening will enable the area rostered leaders and others in the community to attend.

The order for the installation of a rostered leader may be found in the Occasional Services Book.

- The bishop or conference dean, installs the new rostered leader.
- The new rostered leader, the person presiding at the installation, and members of the congregation arrange the service, the service bulletin, and select other participants.

Some congregations include a social event at the time of installation. This may be in the form of a reception or an informal dinner at which time the rostered leader and family can meet members and friends of the congregation and of the community.

EVALUATION OF THE CALL PROCESS

The congregational chairperson and the call committee chair provide feedback on the call process to synod office. This information will be used by synod office to inform and improve the process for all congregations.

[Appendix C3](#) Evaluation of the call process form

NINE MONTH MINISTRY REVIEW

After about nine months, the congregational chairperson calls a meeting of the newly called rostered leader and the congregational council executive. The nine month review provides the new rostered leader and the congregational council executive the opportunity to talk about their ministry together and discuss their strengths and challenges going forward.

[Appendix C4](#) Nine month ministry review

APPENDIX C1 – CONGREGATIONAL CALL MEETING AGENDA



Preparing for the meeting

- a. **Prepare sign-up sheet is prepared for voting members:** The voters list prepared as a sign-up sheet as a list of voting members allowing voting members to sign their names beside their names as they enter the assembly. Scrutineers facilitate this process and field any questions of eligibility.
- b. **Ensure Letter of Call and Employment agreement are complete and on hand.**
- c. **Prepare ballots for the voting:** The ballot is a blank slip of paper and the vote will simply be “yes” or “no” to the call committee’s recommendation.

Call meeting Agenda

1. **Call to Order:** The congregational chairperson calls the meeting to order.
 - a. The chair asks for a report from the scrutineers on the number of voting members present and assures that a quorum is present
 - b. The chair assures with scrutineers that the ballots have been prepared.
 - c. The chair presents the bishop’s representative and the chair of the call committee.
2. **Introduction to Call Meeting**
 - a. The chair invites the bishop’s representative to chair the next portion of the meeting.
 - b. The bishop’s representative briefly reviews the steps in the voting process including:
 - i. Letter of call
 - Presentation of candidate: In a moment the call committee will tell you about the process of the call and you will be given opportunity to ask any questions about the process.
 - The Motion by the call committee: The call committee will then move and second the call of the rostered leader. The call committee will then present their experience of the candidate. The assembly will be invited to ask questions about the candidate.
 - Voting: Constitutionally, the voting will be by written ballot and that voting is restricted to voting members who have signed in
 - ii. Employment agreement
 - If the letter of call is approved the congregational chair presents the Employment agreement for discussion and vote.
 - Questions: Are there any questions about the process?
 - iii. The bishop’s representative offers a prayer for the guidance of the Spirit on the meeting.
3. **Letter of call**
 - a. Presentation of the candidate
 - i. The bishop’s representative calls upon the call committee chairperson to describe briefly the process that was followed and asks for questions from the assembly for clarification.
 - b. Motion by the call committee

- i. The call committee chairperson presents the candidate recommended by the call committee in the form of a motion. "Moved that we call _____ as _____ (pastor/diaconal minister)."
 - ii. The bishop's representative asks for a seconder for the motion.
 - iii. Discussion on the motion.
 - iv. The call committee is invited to present reasons for recommending this candidate.
 - v. The assembly is invited to pose questions or make comments regarding the recommendation for call.
- c. Voting
- i. The bishop's representative conducts the vote on the motion. (The bishop's representative notes that the ballot is a blank piece of paper. The vote will be "yes" to the motion or "no" opposed to the motion). The bishop's representative asks for the ballots to be distributed. Scrutineers distribute the ballots.
 - ii. The ballots are collected as they are ready. Scrutineers collect and count the ballots and report the numbers voting for and against. Scrutineers report the voting results to the bishop's representative. Approval of the motion to call requires 2/3 of those present and voting. While the ballots are being counted, the meeting might wish to join in song.
 - If the motion is defeated, the bishop's representative offers prayer for the candidate and for the congregation. The bishop's representative will communicate the decision to Synod office to restart the call process.
 - If the motion is passed, the bishop's representative invites the meeting to join in prayer for the candidate.
 - iii. The bishop's representative asks for a motion to destroy the ballots.
 - iv. After the motion to destroy ballots is seconded and carried, the bishop's representative returns the meeting to the chair of the congregational council for discussion of remuneration/moving costs, etc.

4. Employment agreement

- a. Presentation of the Employment agreement
 - i. If the letter of call is approved the chair asks the congregational council to present the Employment agreement as negotiated with the primary candidate.
 - ii. The call committee moves and seconds the Employment agreement and responds to questions and comments from the assembly.
 - iii. The assembly votes on the motion on the Employment agreement by a show of hands. A simple majority is needed to approve.
- b. If the motion passes, the officers of the congregation and council sign the Letter of Call and the Employment agreement.
- c. Any changes made by the meeting to the presented Employment agreement are to be noted on the Employment agreement and initialed by the treasurer and bishop's representative. (Moving costs and arrangements are part of the Employment agreement.)

5. Closure of the meeting

- a. The congregational chair informs the congregational meeting on next steps.

- i. that the chair or call committee chair will contact the candidate about the congregational decision as soon as possible.
 - ii. That the call documents will be sent to the bishop for signing and forwarding to the candidate.
 - iii. That the rostered leader is given 30 days to reply to the call
 - iv. That the congregation will be informed of the candidate's decision in a timely manner.
- b. The congregational chair declares the meeting adjourned.
 - c. Following the meeting the bishop (or representative) and the congregational council are directed to the Call process manual directions for, "Following the congregational meeting"

APPENDIX C2 – CERTIFICATION OF CALL PROCEDURE



Date of Meeting: _____

Name of candidate recommended for call: _____

To congregation: _____

Location: _____

Certification of Call Procedure

The Undersigned certifies to the bishop that these procedures were properly followed in issuing the attached Letter of Call. I have initialed each step on the left.

_____ The Call committee voted to recommend the pastor to the congregation by at least a 2/3 majority.

_____ The Call meeting of the congregation was convened in accordance with the congregational constitution.

_____ There were an equal or lesser number of ballots corresponding to number of voting members present.

_____ There was a quorum of voting members at the Call meeting.

_____ Opportunity for full discussion was made available to voting members in attendance.

_____ The Letter of Call was extended by at least a 2/3 majority of votes cast by voting members present at the Call meeting.

_____, The Employment agreement was passed by a majority of those present and initialed by officers.

Respectfully submitted,

_____ Date: _____

Please return this form (email or courier), along with the signed Letter of Call and the Employment agreement. The bishop will countersign, seal, and forward the documents to the rostered leader. Note any further comments on the back of this form.

APPENDIX C3 – EVALUATION OF THE CALL PROCESS



To be completed by the Congregational council chair and Call committee chair

1. The call process was most helpful in these areas: . . .

2. The call process was least helpful in these areas. . .

3. We would appreciate consideration of the following specific changes to the call process.

4. The support we received from the synod office was. . .

5. Other comments....

Please mail or email this form to Synod office as we work to improve our call process.

APPENDIX C4 – NINE MONTH MINISTRY REVIEW



The nine month review provides the new rostered leader and the congregational council ex the opportunity to talk about their ministry together and discuss their strengths and challenges going forward.

Date of review _____ Rostered leader _____

Congregation _____

Conversation on our ministry together

1. What is the new rostered leader most thankful for in the last nine months of ministry?
2. What is council most thankful for in the last nine months of ministry?
3. What does the new rostered leader feel has been the most difficult aspect of the first nine months?
4. What does the council feel has been the most difficult aspect of the first nine months?
5. What are the strengths in the congregation that are appearing?
6. What are the strengths in the new rostered leader that are appearing?
7. Are there changes/challenges in the congregation that council and the new rostered leader need to begin to talk about?

Looking ahead to next year

1. Two specific steps we can take to strengthen our ministry together as a rostered leader/council:
2. Is it time for the council and rostered leader to appoint a mutual ministry committee to continue this review process?