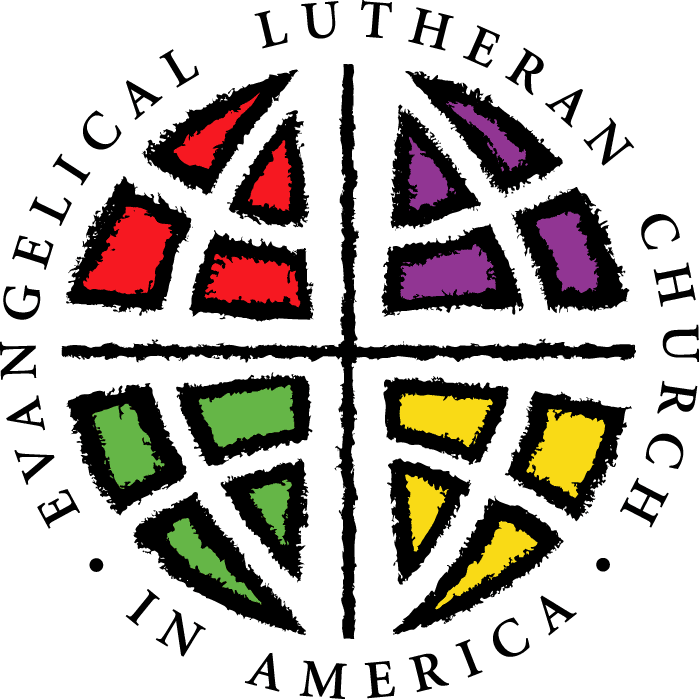
Evangelical Lutheran Church in america

Montana Synod

Call Committee Handbook



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Congratulations. You have been chosen, appointed or elected by your congregation to serve in the special role of identifying the person who will be called to serve as your pastor. It is this pastor who will baptize your children, preside over Holy Communion, visit you in the hospital, and could even officiate at your funeral or that of someone you love. Pastors have a special place in the lives of many people and you have a role in choosing yours. This is not to be taken lightly but with humility and faith.

Here is a bit of advice for call committee members:

1. Pray often. It is easy to drown out the voice of the Holy Spirit with our own wants and prejudices. Ask God to lead you. Pray for your congregation and its future.
2. You, by yourself, are not the call committee. *Together* you are the call committee. No one voice should be heard above the rest. Listen more than you speak. If you are on the call committee to “make sure you don’t get one of ‘those’ pastors,” then you should check your motives. You have been elected to be *a* voice among several. Your voice is important but not more important than others.
3. Do your homework. What does the congregation need right now? What gifts in a pastor are most valuable?
4. Expect to learn something about your congregation, the work of the Holy Spirit, and yourself.

***Prayer***

*O God, Loving Creator, how good and wise you are! You made creation out of chaos, and light out of darkness. You bring day after night, summer after winter, calm after storms and flowers after snow. You make music from silence and bring smiles out of sadness. You bring health out of sickness, hope out of despair, faith out of fear, and resurrection out of death. With you all things are made new. We lift before you now our congregation and its leadership. Help us to be loving, patient and wise as we discern your leading. Bring to us a pastor that preaches your word and guides our congregation towards your will. Amen.*

1. Remember that the call process is a partnership between the call committee, Synod and candidate.

**Where do we start?**

**Step One**

The call process is the means through which God provides leaders for the church. It makes sense then that we should begin by recognizing God’s role in that process and ask for God’s guidance as we proceed. Please pray together the prayer to the right.

**Step Two**

Meet with the bishop’s office

The call committee will normally meet with a representative from the bishop’s office. In this meeting the bishop or the associate to the bishop will:

1. Review the call process
2. Invite the committee to prepare a Ministry Site Profile as a means of providing information about the congregation and assessing its leadership needs
3. Offer support and guidance throughout the entire process

**Step Three**

Choose a call committee chairperson. This person will call the meetings to order and be the contact for the synod office. They will register with the ELCA call process and administer the Ministry Site Profile. They will also be the voice of the call committee and be the one to present the candidate (once chosen) to the congregation.

***The Call Committee Goes To Work***

***Ministry Site Profile***

The call committee, together with the input from the congregation, will assess the leadership needs of the congregation and prepare a **Ministry Site Profile**. The profile may be accessed and downloaded from the website of the ELCA (http://www.elca.org/Call-Process/Ministry-Sites). From the call process page, follow the prompts. You will be instructed on how to create an account for your parish or congregation and download the necessary forms. The identification code for the Montana Synod is “1F” Your congregation’s identification number is found in this document under **Appendix I.** When the Ministry Site Profile is completed, you will be able to submit it electronically to the ELCA database. Once you have done so, the synod office will be notified and will be able to review your profile before making it available to prospective ministry candidates. In filling out this document, be honest about your congregation and realistic about the gifts you would like your new pastor to possess. At the same time, do your best to place your congregation’s ministry in the best light possible. Seek others in the community to give you feedback about the good work you are doing. Describe the ministries of the congregation in detail and be clear about your hopes for the future. This is your chance to share why a pastor would be lucky to serve your congregation.

***Nominations***

If you wish, you may invite nominations of possible candidates from members of the congregation. Nominees for the position of Pastor, Diaconal Minister, or Associate in Ministry must be on the clergy roster of the ELCA or eligible full communion partner denominations. Names should be submitted to the committee in writing, accompanied by as much information as possible, so as to aid the synod office in identifying the nominees. These names are to be forwarded to the synod office which, in turn, will determine if the nominees in question are open and available for call. At this point, the nominees are not to be contacted by either the call committee or by the individual making the nomination. Encourage congregational members to be realistic in making nominations, for example, do members believe their nominees have the requisite gifts, skills, and level of experience that would be appropriate to your congregation?

A form which congregational members might use for making nominations of potential candidates can be provided in the parish newsletter or for two or more consecutive weeks in the Sunday bulletin along with a deadline by which completed forms are to be returned to the committee. (See [**Appendix I**](#Appendix_IV)**I** for a sample nomination form.)

The Montana Synod office will consult with the bishop(s) of the synod(s) in which persons nominated by congregational members presently serve. If the bishop indicates that the nominee is open and available for call, our synod office will contact the pastors nominated to inquire if they are open to consideration by the congregation’s call committee. Receiving a nomination does not guarantee that the candidate will be presented to the call committee. Other factors of congregational fit and suitability are considered by the synod staff.

***Reviewing Candidates***

At the same time the synod office is checking on the availability of candidates nominated by congregational members, the bishop and associate to the bishop will identify other candidates whom they believe have the gifts, skills and experience appropriate for the position you are seeking to fill. These candidates may be persons currently serving in Montana Synod congregations and other synod-related ministries. Others may be persons serving congregations and ministries of other ELCA synods. The synod office will only offer these persons as candidates after determining that they are available for call and are open to consideration by your committee.

The number of candidates a committee receives varies depending on availability and congregation fit. A committee can expect, in most cases, to receive 1-3 candidates. If none of the candidates received seem like a good fit, then all the candidates must be released before receiving further names.

When your committee receives the names of candidates we expect that your committee will interview them. Some may seem like a good fit on paper; others may interview better over the phone. If, after you have contacted them initially, you are confident that they are not a good match for your congregation, then you may release them from consideration verbally or in writing.

The committee will want to discuss and to come to agreement on the following before you begin to review recommended candidates:

1. How many members of the call committee will constitute a quorum for decisions?
2. Will the decision be made by a majority? By a certain percentage of the committee? By consensus? If decisions are made by majority or percentage, decide if the vote should be oral or written. Oral or show of hand votes are sufficient for most decisions. To extend a call, unless the committee is operating on the basis of consensus, a written ballot is appropriate.
3. Discuss the importance of confidentiality. Protecting the identity of the candidates under consideration, at least until the time they come for interviews with the committee, is important out of courtesy for the candidates and the ministries they currently serve. Don’t tell anyone (including your spouse). A pastor’s relationship to his or her present place of ministry can be affected if it becomes known there that he or she is under consideration for call elsewhere. If it turns out that he or she is not the person you elect to call, then continuance in the present place of ministry is made more difficult. Confidentiality can be protected, for example, by contacting only those references within a pastoral candidate’s present congregation whose names have been provided on the “availability for call” form or by the pastoral candidate. Also, it is important to write the pastoral candidate at his or her home address and to use his or her home telephone number.
4. Discuss the terms of the call. Be clear on the mandate given to the committee by the congregation. Is the call for a senior pastor? An associate pastor? Or for a rostered lay person, e.g., associate in ministry or diaconal ministry? If you are calling an associate pastor, will that person’s call be co-terminus with that of the senior pastor? Is the call full-time or part-time? Is the call open-ended, without specification of term, or is it a term call (e.g., for two or three years, after which it may be renewed for an additional term)? In the case of a call to serve as an associate pastor or a rostered lay person, will the person have responsibility for specific areas (e.g., youth and family ministry, parish administration, small group ministries, etc.)?
5. Decide on how the congregation should be kept informed of the committee’s progress. Among the possibilities might be: (1) Bulletin Board with a description of the process, time line for the process, and the names, addresses and photographs of call committee members; (2) Regular updates in the Sunday bulletin; (3) Progress reports in the parish newsletter; and (4) Periodic “temple talks” during the announcements at Sunday services.

The synod office will arrange a time for the bishop or the associate to the bishop to meet with the call committee for the purpose of recommending a candidate or candidates for your prayerful consideration. Along with making recommendations, the bishop or associate will provide you with a “**Rostered Leader Profile” (RLP)** for each candidate. In addition to the material provided in the RLP, the bishop’s office may be able to provide the committee with additional information about each candidate.

Initial Contact with Candidates: Call or email the candidates whose names the call committee has received for consideration letting them know that you are considering them as a possible pastoral candidate. They will be expecting your contact and will have seen your Ministry Site Profile (MSP). Make plans for a formal interview.

Review of “Rostered Leader Profile” (RLP) Information: The RLP form gives the committee information about each candidate in order that you may come up with some general impressions of each candidate’s experience, skills and priorities for ministry. You will want to compare and contrast the candidate’s self-description of his/her ministry priorities with the leadership needs survey that you completed as a part of the Ministry Site Profile. There are, however, no “perfect matches.” A pastor is more than the sum of their skills. A congregation is more than a sum of their needs.

Four references will be listed by each candidate on his/her RLP. The references will include the candidate’s bishop, another pastor, and two lay persons. You are free to contact any or all of the persons listed. Presumably, the references listed will be aware that the candidate is open to call and will not be surprised by a phone call from a call committee member. Others in a candidate’s current congregation, however, will not know this. In the interest of confidentiality, please do not contact persons who have not been listed as references on the RLP.

***Moving Toward the Interview***

After committee members have had an opportunity to review the Rostered Leader Profile on each candidate, the committee will want to meet and decide which candidate(s) should be invited for an interview. While face-to-face interviews with all recommended candidates are to be preferred, an intermediate step—especially if it is not logistically possible to interview all the candidates—might be to set up telephone interviews first. A speakerphone could be employed so that all committee members can participate, ask questions, and together hear the response and questions of each candidate. (Computer applications, such as *Skype*, may be used for video conferencing, if practical.) Telephone interviews should be pre-arranged with the candidates so that they are scheduled for times which are convenient. Also, the committee will want to plan the questions to be asked and allow time for the candidate to ask his/her own questions. Remember, interviews are a 2-way street.

Before making a decision on interviews, committee members should come to your meeting prepared to comment on each candidate. You may want to ask each committee member to write a brief statement on each candidate indicating whether or not to: (1) proceed with an in-person interview, (2) set the candidate aside for possible future consideration, or (3) release the candidate from consideration. If a candidate is released: notify the synod office and notify the candidate (see [**Appendix III**](#Appendix_VI) for a sample of such a letter).

All candidates, regardless of geography or previous knowledge, should be interviewed in the same way. If you Skype with one, your committee should Skype with all. It is unfair to call one person over the phone and meet another in person. This gives an unfair advantage and should be avoided.

***The Interview***

Usually one candidate (but possibly two) will then be invited to your community for an in-person interview with the call committee. But do not introduce them to the congregation until your committee has chosen a single candidate. Presenting more than one will only split the congregation. In addition to the interview itself, arrangements for each candidate’s visit to the community should allow time for the candidate (and spouse) to tour the church facilities, the parsonage and the surrounding community, to visit with other congregational staff persons and congregational officers, and to meet members of the congregation in an informal social setting (e.g., a coffee hour, dessert social, etc.). Also the candidate and spouse may want to visit local schools, consult with a realtor, etc.

Scheduling Interviews: The Chairperson needs to have the authority to arrange the interviews at the earliest possible date, coordinating the candidate’s schedules with those of committee members. Check on airline reservation possibilities, noting that in order to get the best fares, tickets need to be purchased at least 14 days in advance of travel. If the candidate is married, invite the spouse. While—with the exception of a clergy couple—the congregation is not calling the spouse, he or she is certainly part of the decision-making process for the candidate.

The Interview Itself: The interview process can be stressful for candidates. Thus, allowing candidates some privacy while they are in your community by accommodating them in a local hotel or motel is important. This allows the candidate and spouse opportunities to relax after travel and before the interview and other public gatherings at which congregational members may be present. It also affords a candidate time for confidential conversation with his/her spouse.

The purpose of the interview is to get to know the candidate and let the candidate know you. Try, then, to create a relaxed but professional atmosphere. Prior to the scheduled time for the interview, call committee members and spouses may want to entertain the candidate (and spouse) for dinner—either in someone’s home or in a banquet room in a local restaurant. Invite the candidate to offer grace before the meal.

Be prepared as a committee for the interview. Plan on blocking out an hour- and-a-half to two hours for the interview. You can give questions to the pastoral candidate ahead of time to facilitate the discussion. Begin with prayer. Plan your questions in advance and agree as to which committee members will ask which questions. Make sure the same questions are asked of each candidate, but allow freedom for committee members to ask follow-up questions that may be prompted by answers or comments made by the candidate. Also, be sure to allow ample time for the candidate to ask questions of you. The chairperson should monitor the flow of discussion and the call committee secretary should keep minutes of the responses of each candidate.

Appendix IV gives examples of “do’s and don’ts” in conducting an interview and suggestions of interview questions to be asked.

***What happens if we do not feel that any of the candidates given by the synod office seem to fit?***

This does happen from time to time. Do not worry. Once you have released all of the candidates from consideration, call the synod office and let them know of your decision. New candidates will be sought out as they become available.

***Recommending a Candidate to the Congregation***

The Selection Process: Open the meeting with prayer, seeking the Holy Spirit’s guidance as your committee moves toward making a recommendation. You may want to begin by discussing each candidate in the order in which they were interviewed. Allow each committee member to speak about the strengths and growth areas which he/she noted in each candidate’s case. Committee members may then want to comment in writing about each candidate, responding to questions such as: (1) do I believe this is the person we should call? (2) If this candidate is not my first choice for call, do I see him/her still as a viable candidate to whom we want to return? (3) Do I want to release this candidate from further consideration, and why?

After all interviewed candidates have been discussed, the written comments can be collected by the chairperson, collated and reported to the group. Does there seem to be a consensus about one or more candidates? If not, further discussion may be necessary until agreement has been reached or there is a decision to start over.

Once a decision is made concerning the candidate the committee wants to recommend to the congregation, let the candidate and the synod office know by phone that his/her name will be recommended to the congregation. Meanwhile, the other candidates should be contacted to let them know the decision made by the call committee. They will appreciate knowing if they are no longer being considered at this time. See [**Appendix III**](#Appendix_VI) for a model of a letter that can be used.

Present the recommendation to the church council (as a courtesy only; they do not need to approve or vote on the candidate). The church council, in turn, will call a special congregational meeting for the purpose of extending a Letter of Call to the pastor, Associate in Ministry, or Diaconal Minister being recommended. Consult the congregation’s constitution and by-laws which will outline how a special congregational meeting is to be called.

Between the time when the recommendation is made to the council and the date of the congregational meeting, the call committee (in consultation with the congregational president, treasurer and church council) will prepare a proposed compensation and benefits package for the pastor or associate in ministry being recommended. Begin by consulting the synod’s Salary Guidelines (provided by the synod office at www.montanasynod.org) which provide minimum recommendations for base salary (keyed to the number of years the candidate has been ordained or commissioned), as well as for housing, mileage reimbursement, continuing education and vacation.

For comparison purposes, you should be aware of the candidate’s current salary and benefits in the congregation he/she is now serving. This information may be available to you in the annual report of his/her present congregation. Or if you don’t have the annual report, the synod office likely can obtain those figures for you. Specifics regarding compensation, housing, pension, medical coverage, and other benefits are entered in the appropriate places on the “Definition of Compensation, Benefits and Responsibilities” form which will be provided to you by the synod office for help in computing contributions for Pension and Health Benefits, you can use the calculators found at https://employerlink.porticobenefits.org/Home/Resources/Calculators.aspx

First Call Candidates: For pastors and associates in ministry for whom this will be their first call following seminary graduation or completion of candidacy for commissioned ministry, there is an expectation that congregations will endorse their participation in the ELCA’s program of First Call Theological Education. This new to ministry program is designed to assist the pastor or associate in ministry to make the transition from the classroom to the parish. The synod recommends that participation in the annual three-day First Call Theological Education gathering, held the first three years of ministry, not be deducted from the standard continuing education benefit awarded the candidate in the Letter of Call.

Congregations are also encouraged to plan for granting a newly-called pastor or associate in ministry a sabbatical. Guidelines are posted on the Montana Website under resources. After he/she has served the congregation for a given period of time (generally granted after six or seven years of service). The bishop or the bishop’s associate would be happy to discuss these guidelines with your committee. A commitment to provide a sabbatical could be included in the list of benefits accompanying the Letter of Call. Grants and other financial aid are available from various sources to help make a sabbatical possible, and even reasonable.

After completing the “Definition of Compensation, Benefits and Responsibilities” form, please review it with the synod office and with the candidate before the Letter of Call is voted on at the congregational meeting. There should be no surprises.

As you prepare the terms of the call, be fair to the candidate as well as to the congregation. Make sure you will be comfortable sending the benefits package to the candidate and that you will be able to defend it to the congregation.

***Extending a Letter of Call***

The completed Letter of Call, along with the supporting “Definition of Compensation, Benefits and Responsibilities”, are signed by the congregation president and one other officer (generally the secretary) and mailed to the synod office for the bishop’s endorsement. After the bishop has reviewed the call paperwork and signed it, the synod office mails the Letter of Call and “Definition of Compensation” form to the candidate. The candidate has 30 days to respond to the congregation in writing as to whether or not he/she will accept the call. Assuming acceptance of the call, the synod office will work with the congregational leaders to arrange a service of installation for the newly-called pastor or associate in ministry.

With the candidate’s acceptance of the call and with his/her service of installation into the ministry of your congregation, the responsibilities of your call committee may come to an end. Some call committees continue by planning the installation service, and continue to support the pastor as a mutual ministry committee.

These past weeks have been ones during which much was asked of you. You were entrusted by the congregation to seek out, under the Holy Spirit’s guidance, that pastor or rostered lay person whom God is calling to serve you with the Gospel at this point in the congregation’s history. For the time, effort, wisdom and faithfulness you have exhibited during this process, you have the sincere gratitude of your parish, your newly-called pastor or rostered lay minister, and all of your sisters and brothers in Christ’s church.

*“Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged*

*in this ministry, we do not lose heart…*

*For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord*

*and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake…*

*But we have this treasure [the ministry] in clay jars, so that it may be*

*made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God*

*and does not come from us.”* (2 Corinthians 4:1,5,7)

**A Checklist for Call Committees**

* Call the Synod
* Pray
* Elect a Call Committee chair, co-chair and Secretary
* Create an account on the ELCA website
* Print the Ministry Site Profile form
* Partner with you congregation to fill out the Ministry Site Profile (MSP)
* Electronically submit profile to ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)
* Contact the Montana Synod Office alerting them to the finished and submitted MSP
* Meet with Synod Staff in person to receive names of possible candidates
* Interview candidates
* Once a candidate has been chosen, advise the congregational council and have them determine a compensation package and set a date for a congregational meeting.
* Present the candidate to the congregation for a vote.

**Appendix I: Congregation Identification Number for Ministry Site Profile**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Congregation** | **City** | **State** | **Cong. ID #** |
| Immanuel Lutheran | Absarokee | MT | 13341 |
| Hope Lutheran | Anaconda | MT | 13342 |
| Freedom in Christ Prison Congregation | Anaconda | MT | 30996 |
| Jocko Valley Lutheran | Arlee | MT | 30136 |
| First English Lutheran | Bainville | MT | 13344 |
| American Lutheran | Baker | MT | 13345 |
| Christ Lutheran | Big Sandy | MT | 13348 |
| All Saints Lutheran | Big Sky | MT | 30785 |
| Big Timber Lutheran | Big Timber | MT | 13349 |
| Peace Lutheran | Billings | MT | 13353 |
| Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd | Billings | MT | 13352 |
| Atonement Lutheran | Billings | MT | 13351 |
| Bethlehem Lutheran | Billings | MT | 04836 |
| Messiah Lutheran | Billings | MT | 04838 |
| First English Lutheran | Billings | MT | 04837 |
| King of Glory Lutheran | Billings | MT | 16293 |
| American Lutheran | Billings | MT | 13350 |
| Our Savior's Lutheran | Bonner | MT | 13354 |
| Our Saviour's Lutheran | Box Elder | MT | 04839 |
| Christ the King Lutheran | Bozeman | MT | 04851 |
| Hope Lutheran | Bozeman | MT | 13357 |
| Our Savior's Lutheran | Broadus | MT | 13358 |
| Broadview Lutheran | Broadview | MT | 13359 |
| Gold Hill Evangelical Lutheran | Butte | MT | 13362 |
| Gloria Dei Lutheran | Butte | MT | 04840 |
| American Lutheran | Chinook | MT | 13367 |
| Trinity Lutheran | Choteau | MT | 13368 |
| First Lutheran | Circle | MT | 13369 |
| All Saints Lutheran | Clancy | MT | 30539 |
| Trinity Lutheran | Cody | WY | 13372 |
| Our Savior's Lutheran | Columbia Falls | MT | 13373 |
| St. James Lutheran | Columbus | MT | 04841 |
| Trinity Lutheran | Culbertson | MT | 13376 |
| Ebenezer Lutheran of McCabe | Culbertson | MT | 13434 |
| St. Paul Lutheran | Cut Bank | MT | 13377 |
| Volmer Lutheran | Dagmar | MT | 04842 |
| Dodson Lutheran | Dodson | MT | 13380 |
| Bethany Lutheran | Dutton | MT | 13381 |
| St. Elizabeth's Lutheran | Ekalaka | MT | 30475 |
| St. Paul Lutheran | Fairfield | MT | 13383 |
| Grace Lutheran | Fairfield | MT | 13382 |
| Zion Lutheran | Fairview | MT | 13384 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Hope American Lutheran | Fallon | MT | 13385 |
| Valley of Christ Lutheran | Frenchtown | MT | 16091 |
| Froid Lutheran | Froid | MT | 13390 |
| Fort Peck Lutheran | Ft. Peck | MT | 90009 |
| Devon Lutheran | Galata | MT | 13378 |
| Galata Lutheran | Galata | MT | 13391 |
| Hingham Lutheran | Gildford | MT | 13406 |
| First Lutheran | Glasgow | MT | 13392 |
| Zion Lutheran | Glendive | MT | 13393 |
| First English Lutheran | Great Falls | MT | 04844 |
| Bethel Lutheran | Great Falls | MT | 04843 |
| New Hope Lutheran Ministry | Great Falls | MT | 30946 |
| Our Savior's Lutheran | Great Falls | MT | 13396 |
| Redeemer Lutheran | Great Falls | MT | 13397 |
| St. John Lutheran | Great Falls | MT | 04845 |
| Peace Lutheran | Greybull | WY | 90155 |
| Faith Lutheran | Hamilton | MT | 13398 |
| First American Lutheran | Hardin | MT | 13399 |
| American Lutheran | Harlem | MT | 13400 |
| Grace Lutheran | Harlowton | MT | 13346 |
| American Lutheran | Harlowton | MT | 13401 |
| Trinity Lutheran | Harlowton | MT | 13426 |
| Messiah Lutheran | Havre | MT | 13403 |
| First Lutheran | Havre | MT | 13402 |
| Our Redeemer's Lutheran | Helena | MT | 13405 |
| New Life Lutheran | Helena | MT | 07738 |
| St. John's Lutheran | Helena | MT | 04846 |
| Hinsdale Lutheran | Hinsdale | MT | 13407 |
| American Lutheran | Hogeland | MT | 13408 |
| Trinity Lutheran | Hot Springs | MT | 13410 |
| Joliet Lutheran | Joliet | MT | 13411 |
| Bethel Lutheran | Joplin | MT | 13412 |
| St. John's Lutheran | Jordan | MT | 13414 |
| Northridge Lutheran | Kalispell | MT | 16105 |
| Bethlehem Lutheran | Kalispell | MT | 13415 |
| Kremlin Lutheran | Kremlin | MT | 13419 |
| Our Savior's Lutheran | Laurel | MT | 13423 |
| Zion Lutheran | Lewistown | MT | 13427 |
| Christ Lutheran | Libby | MT | 13428 |
| Redeemer Lutheran | Livingston | MT | 04847 |
| American Lutheran | Livingston | MT | 13430 |
| Loring Lutheran | Loring | MT | 13431 |
| Malta Lutheran | Malta | MT | 13433 |
| First Lutheran | Miles City | MT | 13437 |
| St. Paul Lutheran | Missoula | MT | 13439 |
| Prince of Peace Lutheran | Missoula | MT | 04849 |
| Atonement Lutheran | Missoula | MT | 13438 |
| Immanuel Lutheran | Missoula | MT | 04848 |
| Our Redeemer Lutheran | Nashua | MT | 13441 |
| Bethel Lutheran | Nashua | MT | 13440 |
| First Lutheran | Plains | MT | 13447 |
| Plentywood Lutheran | Plentywood | MT | 13448 |
| Peace Lutheran | Plevna | MT | 13449 |
| Good Shepherd Lutheran | Polson | MT | 13450 |
| Our Savior's Lutheran | Poplar | MT | 13360 |
| Hope Lutheran | Powell | WY | 13453 |
| Messiah Lutheran | Red Lodge | MT | 13454 |
| Faith Lutheran | Reserve | MT | 13455 |
| Nathanael Lutheran | Reserve | MT | 04850 |
| First Lutheran - Lambert | Richey | MT | 13420 |
| American Lutheran | Richey | MT | 13458 |
| Faith Lutheran | Ronan | MT | 13461 |
| American Lutheran | Roundup | MT | 13424 |
| Zion Lutheran | Roundup | MT | 13462 |
| Immanuel Lutheran | Rudyard | MT | 13413 |
| Goldstone Lutheran | Rudyard | MT | 13463 |
| Saco Lutheran | Saco | MT | 13466 |
| First Lutheran | Savage | MT | 13469 |
| Grace Lutheran | Savage | MT | 13473 |
| St. Luke's Lutheran | Shelby | MT | 13471 |
| Emmanuel Lutheran | Shepherd | MT | 13472 |
| Trinity Lutheran | Sheridan | WY | 05513 |
| Pella Evangelical Lutheran | Sidney | MT | 13474 |
| Eidsvold Lutheran | Somers | MT | 13475 |
| Lutheran Church of Sunburst | Sunburst | MT | 13477 |
| Our Savior's Lutheran | Thompson Falls | MT | 13478 |
| Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran | Townsend | MT | 13479 |
| American Lutheran | Turner | MT | 13480 |
| St. John's Lutheran | Westby | MT | 13484 |
| Immanuel Lutheran | Westby | MT | 13483 |
| American Lutheran | White Sulphur Springs | MT | 13486 |
| Whitewater Lutheran | Whitewater | MT | 13487 |
| Shields River Lutheran | Wilsall | MT | 13489 |
| Spirit of Life | Wolf Point | MT | 31082 |

**APPENDIX II: CANDIDATE NOMINATION FORM**

**Please note that each candidate for call to a congregation of the Montana Synod must be a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America who is in good standing on the roster of ordained ministers in his/her synod.**

I wish to nominate Pastor

to the call committee and ask that the committee consider him/her

for the position of

His/her current address is

where he/she is currently serving as pastor of

Lutheran Church.

I believe this pastor would be an appropriate candidate to consider

for call to our congregation for the following reasons:

Signed

Date Submitted

**APPENDIX III: RELEASE FROM CONSIDERATION**

**SAMPLE OF LETTER WHICH COULD BE USED WITH**

**A MINISTRY CANDIDATE RELEASED FROM CONSIDERATION**

This is a suggested model for such correspondence. If you adapt this or create your own to use with candidates whom you are releasing, please affirm for the candidates what you saw as their gifts and strengths (which will be helpful for them to know as they become candidates in other congregations), and genuinely thank them for being open to your process.

**St. Mark’s Lutheran Church**

**Any town, MT**

Date

The Rev.

Street Address

City, State, ZIP

Dear Pr. :

On behalf of the call committee I want to express our appreciation to you for being open to consideration for call to serve our congregation/parish.

The committee has thoroughly reviewed all of the information we have received on the candidates recommended to us. In terms of your gifts and experience, we were impressed by ­ .

It was not an easy decision, but as we compared your strengths and commitments with those of other candidates, we concluded that our congregation would be best served at this time by a person with a different set of skills. We regret, then, to inform you that you are no longer under active consideration for call to our congregation. The Montana synod office has been notified of our decision.

As this has been a time of discernment for our call committee, we hope it has been one for you out of which will come a new sense of where God is calling you—either to recommit to your present ministry or to continue to make yourself open and available for call elsewhere. Be assured that our prayers will be with you.

Yours in Christ,

**APPENDIX IV: Interview Helps**

SOME SUGGESTED “DO”S AND “DON’T”S

1. Do begin with prayer. Don’t feel pressured to undertake this responsibility without adequate support and assistance from the congregation in terms of their prayers for you.
2. Do plan and prepare for your interview with sufficient lead time so that you can send to the prospective candidate a copy of your agenda concerns for his/her own preparation for the interview. (He/she may wish to send his/her agenda concerns in advance of the interview.)
3. Do plan time for the candidate to present his/her agenda items. Don’t bypass or soft-pedal his/her concerns. Such questions will tell much about the person. Your responses will tell them much about you.
4. Do allow the candidate to express any particular personal or family needs, but don’t bargain over salary proposals, housing, etc. Only the congregation has authority to set remuneration sums. Customarily that occurs at the congregation call meeting.
5. Do expect that the interview will give you a good idea of the candidate’s interest and availability. Don’t press the candidate to answer the question as to what he/she would do with the call if you extended it. Don’t even ask the question!!
6. Do expect God to do great things in these interviews! (You may gain as much or more new insight into your own congregation as into the persons you’ve interviewed.) Don’t become impatient in the process. Take the time you need.
7. Do follow up each interview with a note to the candidate, updating him/her on the status of the interview process, the date of the congregational meeting (once the date is set) and thank him/her for his/her willingness to be interviewed. Don’t leave him/her dangling with little or no information about your schedule and plans.
8. Do keep the congregation informed during the interview process (parish paper, Sunday bulletins, verbal announcements, etc.). Don’t assume they know what you (church council/call committee) are dong, why, or when. Chances are good they need regular reminders.
9. REGARDING THE CALL ITSELF:

Contact the Synod Office as soon as possible, if in the church council, call committee or congregation there are serious questions or misgivings about the remuneration package, or about any candidate to whom the call may be extended, or as in some instances, has been extended. Don’t enter into private counsel or individual negotiations with the person who you wish to call.

**INTERVIEW GUIDELINES**

Keep in mind that you are interviewing a candidate for a prospective call. Questions that you ask should therefore focus on the candidate’s ability to perform that ministry. Questions that have nothing to do with the ability of a candidate to fulfill the requirements of the ministry are unfair.

**AGE**

It is **UNFAIR** to ask questions which show discrimination against person of a certain age when age has nothing to do with the person’s ability to do the job.

**FAMILY**

It is **FAIR** to ask whether a candidate might have activities or commitments that would prevent him/her from meeting work requirements.

It is **UNFAIR** to inquire about a spouse, the spouse’s employment, children, childcare arrangements, or dependents. In the event that you offer a call to this person, then it would be appropriate to address these issues in regard to how you might better welcome and assimilate them into your community.

**HANDICAPS**

It is **FAIR** to ask whether a candidate has certain specified sensory, mental, or physical handicaps which relate reasonably to fitness in performing the job or whether the candidate has handicaps or other health problems which may affect work performance.

It is **UNFAIR** to “go fishing” with overly general questions that would tend to divulge handicaps or health questions which do not relate reasonably to fitness to perform the job.

**MARITAL STATUS**

For purposes of pre-call inquiry, there are no **FAIR** questions unless one can show that such questions reasonably relate to the candidate’s ability to perform the tasks of ministry.

**NATIONAL ORIGIN**

It is **FAIR** to inquire about the applicant’s ability to speak, read, and write foreign languages when such requirements are based on ministry requirements.

It is **UNFAIR** to inquire about an applicant’s lineage, ancestry, national origin, or mother tongue. This includes the national origin of the applicant’s spouse or parents.

**RACE OR COLOR**

What does this have to do with the candidate’s ability to do ministry? There are no **FAIR** questions here.

**OTHER SENSITIVE ISSUES**

Remember the general rule: Unless it can be shown that you need the information because it is an actual qualification for ministry, don’t ask the question! Each applicant has a right to be considered on the merits and according to standards that are being used on all the other candidates.

1. **SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

The following is a list of possible topics for discussion during your call committee’s interview with a ministry candidate. These suggested questions are generic and will not necessarily apply to the situation of you congregation. But they may offer you a starting point for building a list of questions which will reflect the particular context and ministry needs of your parish.

*The purpose of this extensive outline is to build an agenda for your interview/conversation. Carefully chosen questions will make for an effective interview. Toward this end, it is suggested that the candidate be given your outline of questions when you arrange the interview.*

1. THE IMAGE OF THE MINISTRY
   1. How do you conceive of the ministry of the congregation? What is your style of ministry?
   2. What is the role of the laity in the ministry?
   3. How do you view the following: “The purpose of the staff, the lay leaders and the various organizations is to assist the laity to be the Church in worship, nurture, witness, and in service to the world”?
   4. From a review of our Ministry Site Profile, do you see areas of particular ministry needs or focus?
   5. How do you see the pastor and laity assisting each other, as a community of faith, for maximum use of abilities and resources in ministry? What functions do you see the pastor assuming; the laity assuming?
   6. Who (staff or church council) best makes what kind of decisions in providing leadership for the congregation?
2. THE PLACE OF WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH
   1. What are your concepts of worship?
   2. What is the chief function of the pastor or other rostered leader in worship?
   3. How do you view “innovations” relating to traditional worship?
   4. What do you expect to happen through the sermon?
   5. How can the laity help the pastor maintain a high level of sermon quality?
3. EVANGELISM
   1. What is your concept of evangelism?
   2. What is your vision for preparing children, youth, and adults for church membership? Do you see this as a staff responsibility?
   3. Does the candidate feel qualified to train the laity for organized programs of evangelism “outreach” in the community or “in-reach” to nominal members?
4. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
   1. What is the role of Christian Education in the parish program?
   2. Do you see any special emphasis—areas or ages—for Christian Education?
   3. Can you suggest fresh patterns that might be employed in our Christian Education program?
   4. What are your views on training and supervising the teaching staff?
   5. What are your recommendations of a Christian education curriculum?
5. THE PLACE OF PASTOR’S RESPONSIBILITY
   1. How does the pastor assist the laity in the tasks of the Church?
   2. What is the role of the pastor in visitation, such as: to the elderly, shut-ins, and the sick; to persons in distress; to persons with marital problems; etc.
   3. How much of the responsibility for visitation should be shared by trained groups of laity? Which areas should be the pastor’s sole responsibility?
   4. What are your views and customs when it comes to doing counseling, e.g., premarital, pre-baptismal, and pre-confirmation, as well as general pastoral counseling?
   5. What is the role of the pastor and the laity at the time of a death in the congregation?
   6. What are your preferences regarding the pastor’s teaching role in the congregation?
6. LEADERSHP AND MANAGEMENT
   1. Do you as a pastor, in your position of leadership, encourage and practice the principle that people tend to support ideas they have had the opportunity to formulate? How?
   2. What is your view of establishing a congregational vision to focus attention on and participation in high priority programs and to measure progress?
   3. How do you feel about an annual review and evaluation of pastoral, church council, and committee ministries, made between key laity and the staff?
   4. How you feel about a congregational self—study once every two or three years; including such items as: goal attainment, major ongoing ministries, areas of need, expectations of parishioners, etc.?
   5. Would you support the establishment of goals by the council and committees with an annual evaluation of the goals?
   6. What are your views on an annual council retreat?
   7. What is your response to this statement? “In the context of congregational life, church members (including the leaders) quickly learn to avoid conflict and often seek peace at most any price.”
   8. What is your response to this statement? “To lead you must let go. You must delegate responsibility.”
7. COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ACTION
   1. What is your concept of the staff’s role in community betterment activities?
   2. How do you address social issues?
   3. What is the place of the staff in social action?
8. WIDER CHURCH INVOLVEMENT
   1. What will be your role in the Cluster, Synod, Region, and Churchwide ELCA?
   2. What are your thoughts about local, Synod and Churchwide ELCA benevolences?
9. GENERAL
   1. Would you desire a Mutual Ministry Committee to work with the staff in the parish? How would members be chosen?
      1. *A Mutual Ministry Committee is most often a small group of carefully chosen persons who relate to the pastor and the entire church staff. They meet periodically with the staff and with individual staff members, as requested, to talk over matters of mutual interest and concern. More specifically, this committee normally functions to develop harmonious interpersonal staff relationships and to offer counsel in ironing out difficulties and conflict that may arise.*
   2. Are there any significant needs concerning the parsonage (if offered), its condition or use?
   3. Should we consider the possibility of a housing allowance instead of a parsonage?
   4. What other items would you wish to discuss?
   5. Is there any need or plan for a major or minor building (facility) program?
10. QUESTIONS THE CANDIDATE MAY WISH TO ASK YOU
    1. What is the focus of the congregation’s ministry?
    2. What is the history of the congregation?
    3. What are your views about the role of the pastor’s spouse… in congregational life, in community affairs, in employment, etc.?
    4. What is the role of pastor and staff, and what is the laity’s role?
    5. Are there congregational provisions for continuing education?
    6. How many interest groups and organizations are there?
    7. What patterns of worship are employed? How is worship planned and led?
    8. How many people are involved in leadership roles? How are lay people involved in worship?
    9. How involved do like your staff person to be in the community?
    10. Describe your administrative structure.
    11. What has been done in:
        * + 1. Evangelism?
            2. Finance?
            3. Social Ministry?
            4. Christian Education?
            5. Stewardship?
    12. Is there a need for a building program? How do you rate your facilities?
    13. What long and short term goals has the congregation adopted? When was the last in-depth self-analysis of the congregation’s program/function done?
    14. What are the links between this congregation and the community; and other churches?
    15. Describe the “personality” of your congregation.
    16. What other staff is employed? Are changes in these positions expected?
    17. How does the congregation respond to change?
    18. What is the congregation’s benevolence record for the last three years?
    19. What conflict has there been? How was it dealt with?

**APPENDIX V: TIPS FOR A CALL COMMITTEE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A CANDIDATE**

Be honest:

* When filling out the congregational profile be as honest as possible, even about things that might be difficult. It is better for a candidate to know about conflict or past history up front than to get into a called situation and find out in round-about ways.
* Same thing applies during interviews when candidates ask direct questions.

During interviews, put your best face forward as first impressions go both ways:

* Pay for mileage if the candidate drives.
* Pay for a hotel room (if a candidate wishes to stay with a congregation member, make arrangements, but don’t expect them to stay in someone’s home).
* Offer food and/or drink at interviews. Sharing a meal is a good way to interact in a less formal way.
* Give the candidate a driving tour of the area; don’t expect them to explore on their own unless they express a desire to do so.

Communication is the key!

* After the interview, touch base with the candidate. A simple thank you for their time goes a long way to showing that you value their schedule.
* Let the candidate know your time line. He or she does not have to know who else you are interviewing, but an idea of how many other candidates there are and therefore how long the interview process might take is very helpful.
* Honor those time lines. If you tell a candidate you will let them know something on a specific date, call or e-mail them on or before that date. Even if the time line changes and a decision hasn’t been made, it is nice for the candidate to have an idea of what is going on instead of having to contact you after the deadline has passed.
* Communicate your intentions to the candidate sooner rather than later. If you decide to go with another candidate, let both (or all) candidates know on the same day. Waiting is hard, and it’s better to hear from the committee than through the synod grapevine (Montana is a big state, but a small synod when it comes to the grapevine).

**APPENDIX VI: FIRST CALL CONGREGATIONS**

To: ***Congregations Considering a “First Call” Pastor***

**From: Montana Synod**

**Re: “The Vocation of First Call Congregations”**

**Below you will find a summary of the collective wisdom shared with the ELCA Vocation and Education Unit by congregations who have been involved with “First Call.”**

**This summary includes comments, descriptions, and suggestions for helping to make a “First Call” successful, meaningful, and effective.**

**We thought you might find these insights of benefit.**

**God’s blessing and guidance as you consider calling and joining in ministry with a “First Call” pastor.**

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

**Notes from…**

**Lilly Endowment Project: The Vocation of First Call Congregations**

**ELCA, Vocation & Education Unit**

**WHAT MAKES FIRST CALL CONGREGATIONS UNIQUE?**

* **INTENTIONAL PARTICIPATION IN THE GROWTH OF THE PASTOR**

Realizing they are calling a pastor without experience, lay people take it upon themselves to help educate, nurture, support, as well as critique, their first call pastor. There is a sense that they are cheerleaders as well as coaches in this special nurturing role.

* **HOPE FOR LONG TERM PASTORATE**

While all congregations hope for a long term pastorate, first call congregations seem to imbue this hope with more intensity, perhaps fearing their pastor may not intend to stay long in the first call – especially if it is in a context that is foreign to him/her. Making mistakes may carry more weight in first call congregations. Lay leaders may fear that if something goes wrong, their pastor will leave; thus adding tension to how they respond to their pastor, including his/her ideas for change and style of ministry.

* **RESPONSIBILITY FOR INFLUENCING PASTOR’S FUTURE MINISTRY**

The experiences and memories of one’s first call can color the rest of one’s ministry in positive and negative ways. Lay leaders need to be aware of their responsibility in giving shape and form to the first call leader’s expectations in future calls and a sense of confidence throughout their pastoral ministry.

* **REFRAMING OF ATTITUDES**

More prevalent in first call congregations, attitudes such as: “We can only afford a pastor just starting out,” or “We don’t have to change much since he/she won’t be with us very long” need to be reframed to create a healthy first call ministry. Lay leaders should be aware that they have a unique opportunity in receiving an eager, new leader – a first call pastor who could help them reflect on who they are and where they want to be going. An example of reframing a negative attitude might be that the first call pastor “is on loan” to the congregation, providing an opportunity to continue, even for a short time, the substantial investment of the seminary, resulting in dividends to themselves and to the pastor and his/her family.

* **IDENTITY ISSUES OF THE FIRST CALL PASTOR AND THE CONGREGATION**

Wearing the mantle of “pastor” for the first time carries with it complex but important identity issues to be discerned and reflected upon. Whether one is starting a first career or coming to the pastorate from other careers, pastoral identity needs attention across its various dimensions (ministerial role, authority, boundaries, leadership style). One’s self-identity comes into play especially during times of tension or conflict. A healthy self-awareness helps new pastors deal with whatever comes their way.

The congregation also has to deal with its corporate identity as a community of faith that is partnering with a new pastor to create a healthy, life-giving pastorate. The issue of esteem might be particularly challenging, especially if the congregation doesn’t feel they have much to offer or to sustain a first call leader.

* **STRONGEST COMMON THEMES AND STRENGTHS OF FIRST CALL CONGREGATIONS**

♦ Importance of intentionality in welcome and hospitality for pastor and family;

♦ Managing, adapting and embracing change as a reality;

♦ Lay leaders in a partner relationship with pastor vs. employer/employee roles;

♦ Making meaningful connections to one’s community and the broader church;

♦ Strong congregational identity – a “joyous pride” in knowing who they are;

♦ Important role of visioning and planning;

♦ Congregations aware they are “training ground” or “a finishing school” to help FC

pastors learn and thrive;

♦ Congregational flexibility and the ability to live through anything;

♦ Dealing with the reality of their budget constraints in positive ways; and

♦ A sense of hope and possibility under girding their behaviors.