

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CALL PROCESS

How long will it take to find a pastor?

The call process varies in length of time from one congregation to another. It is difficult to complete the call process in less than 6 months and many congregations find it lasts a year or more. The length of the process depends on such things as number of candidates interviewed; the time call committee and candidates have available for conversation, and the needs of the congregation for grieving and preparation for the next pastor.

What will the congregation do during this time of transition regarding pastoral leadership?

In a pastoral vacancy, the office of bishop, in consultation with the congregation council, will appoint an interim pastor who will, at a minimum, meet with the congregation council each month, provide emergency pastoral care, and make sure the confirmation program continues. The responsibilities of the interim pastor will vary and may range from a few hours a week to full-time, depending on the availability of the interim pastor and the needs of the congregation. A letter of agreement is signed between the council and the pastor that explains exactly what the interim pastor will be doing during this time.

What are the sources of names provided by the office of bishop to the call committee?

The names of the candidates come from a variety of places, including:

- Pastors from North Carolina Synod asking to be available for conversation with call committees and having submitted availability for call forms.
- Pastors from other synods who have asked that their availability for call forms be shared with congregations in North Carolina. Candidates from outside North Carolina must be given clearance by their synodical bishop.
- Pastors identified by the bishop and bishop's staff as particularly suited for a congregation.
- Recent seminary graduates awaiting their first call.
- Pastors suggested by members of the congregation.

Will there be pastors willing to talk with our call committee?

The answer is almost always "yes." In highly specialized situations or in part time ministry opportunities there may be fewer candidates to consider; however, in general, the Holy Spirit is able to bring gifts and needs together. A pastor often welcomes the opportunity to talk about ministry with a call committee and see what the Spirit has in mind.

Should we follow compensation guidelines?

Yes, if at all possible. The guidelines are just that - guidelines. While not every congregation is able to reach or exceed the recommended figures, the guidelines serve as benchmarks to guide congregations and candidates in helpful conversation regarding what is fair and adequate. If compensation is far below guidelines, fewer candidates may be able to consider the call to a particular congregation - a part-time call should be explored.

Can we invite the candidates to preach in our congregation on a Sunday morning?

We suggest that candidates (normally) not be invited to preach in a congregation where they are being considered. If a candidate preaches in a congregation, the entire congregation can become involved in the overall process and members are put in the position of deciding on that person's merit on the basis of worship leadership alone which is only one of many elements of pastoral ministry. It is often difficult for a candidate to be away from his/her congregation on a Sunday morning. Call committees often travel to the pastor's congregation or to a neutral site.

Should spouses of call committee members travel and visit with the call committee?

This is not recommended. It is normally better for the call committee to travel and interview without spouses since spouses have not been selected to participate in the call process. Committee members need the freedom to interact with complete confidentiality as those chosen to represent the congregation.

Should there be alternate members of the call committee?

We do not recommend alternate members; however, if alternates are elected or appointed, they should attend all meetings of the call committee and have voice, but should not vote unless a regular member of the committee finds it necessary to relinquish his or her position.

What if we have additional questions?

If at any time during the call process you have questions, concerns, or ideas, please feel free to communicate with the member of the bishop's staff that is coordinating the call process in the congregation.