

**CO-TERMINUS CALLS**  
Southwestern Texas Synod  
April, 2000

(References to *associate pastor* below apply equally to assistant pastors, associates in ministry, deaconal ministers, and deaconesses.)

The Office of Bishop of the Southwestern Texas Synod recommends that congregations calling an associate pastor or other lay rostered staff note on the Letter of Call that the Call is Co-Terminus with the Call of the Senior Pastor. This recommendation is made for two reasons: to ensure that the congregation will have an orderly Call Process if ever it may need to seek a new senior pastor, and to resolve the impasse and conflict that can be created if a new senior pastor determines that it is not possible to form a workable ministry team with the current staff.

Co-Terminus Process: Upon the resignation of the senior pastor, the associate pastor will verbally and/or in writing offer to the Congregation Council an undated letter of resignation. In some instances (e.g. because of congregational conflict), the Congregation Council may need to accept the resignation effective immediately. More likely, the Council will defer action on the resignation and, instead, encourage the associate pastor to continue in his/her present call throughout the time of vacancy, search, and up to six months of time in which a new senior pastor is on site. By the end of six months, the Congregation Council in consultation with the new senior pastor should act to finally reject or accept the letter of resignation. If rejecting, the Council and/or congregation can act to reaffirm the continuing Call of the associate pastor. If accepting, the Council should work with the bishop and the associate pastor on the terms for an acceptable severance package.

Election to Senior Process: In some instances, the associate pastor will wish to be considered for election to the position of senior pastor. In this case, the associate pastor should indicate their interest to the Congregation Council within 30 days of the senior pastor's resignation and before the Council has acted to create a Call Committee. The Council must agree by a two-thirds vote to recommend to the congregation that "the bishop of the Southwestern Texas Synod be asked to submit only the name of Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ to this congregation for Call at this time..." The congregation's vote on this motion to request a variance in the usual Call Process must pass by an 80% majority. The bishop will agree to the request and a subsequent congregational meeting may proceed to vote on issuing a Letter of Call according to the regular constitutional provisions. If the vote on the request for a variance does not reach an 80% majority, the Congregation Council will proceed to form a regular Call Committee and the candidates that the Call Committee will eventually consider will not include the associate pastor. The associate pastor may, however, request to continue as the associate pastor as outlined in the previous paragraph.

Being Sensitive: The Congregation Council is urged to be highly sensitive to the needs and dilemma that that associate pastor feels in such times, as well as the confusion that the membership may feel. Assure the associate pastor (1) that their help, good will, and clear communication will be appreciated, (2) that it will be important that they continue to function in their current role during the vacancy and not allow others to assume they are the "temporary senior pastor," and (3) that the Council is willing to provide whatever support (counseling, gift assessment, ministry review, vocational guidance) that might be helpful to the associate. Assure the membership that (1) there is a process in place to consider the continuation of the Call of the associate pastor as well as a process to use if there is a desire to consider her/him for the position of senior pastor, (2) that the associate pastor is being cared for personally, spiritually, and professionally, and (3) that the membership will be kept informed about the process and the decisions that are made.

As in all things, pray for one another, support one another, and do what promotes the health and welfare of the other. Seek the counsel and wisdom of the Spirit so that your leadership may be caring and careful.