

*Our pastor has resigned:*

- What should we do first?
- What help can we expect?
- How can we grow through this change and look forward to an even brighter future with the arrival of a new pastor?

This brochure has been designed to help your congregation move thoughtfully, purposefully and effectively throughout the pastoral call process.

*“The gifts Christ gave were that some would be pastors to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the Body of Christ.”*

***Ephesians 4:11-12***

**“The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Holds the congregation and the office of ordained ministry in high regard. Consequently, this church body invests substantial resources in support of the congregations during times of change in pastoral leadership.”**

ELCA Guidelines for Ordained Ministers  
Serving in Interim Ministry



**Southwest California Synod**

1300 E Colorado St  
Glendale CA 91205-1406  
Website: [www.socalsynod.org](http://www.socalsynod.org)  
Phone: 818-507-9591  
Fax: 818-507-9627  
E-mail: [office@socalsynod.org](mailto:office@socalsynod.org)

Southwest California Synod Synod, ELCA

## PASTORAL LEADERSHIP TRANSITION STEPS

*A Resource for Congregations*



## **STEP ONE: YOUR PASTOR RESIGNS**

1. After your pastor notifies the congregation, s/he sends a copy of the letter of resignation to the Bishop.
2. The Bishop meets with the Congregation Council to assess the interim needs of the congregation during the pastoral vacancy and to explain the Mission Exploration Team (MET) and call process.
3. Closure with your pastor.
  - An Assistant to the Bishop conducts an exit interview with the pastor.
  - The congregation holds a farewell celebration.
  - After the resignation, the pastor makes it clear that s/he will have no pastoral duties with members of the congregation.

## **STEP TWO: INTERIM MINISTRY BEGINS**

1. The Synod assists with Sunday supply until an Interim Pastor is identified.
2. The Bishop appoints an Interim Pastor.
3. The Council meets with the appointed Interim, gives its endorsement, and a Letter of Agreement is signed. (Note: the Interim Pastor will not be available for Call by the congregation)
4. The Interim Pastor cares for the congregation and helps it evaluate its stewardship practices and programs.
5. The Interim Pastor oversees the audits of the congregation's financial records, membership statistics and constitution.
6. The Council selects 5-7 members of the congregation to serve on the MET.
7. The Council reviews the constitutional requirements for the selection of the Call Committee and helps form the Call Committee.
8. The Council approves a budget for the Call Committee's expenses.

## **STEP THREE: THE MET'S TASK**

1. An Assistant to the Bishop meets with the congregation's Mission Exploration Team.
2. A member of a neighboring ELCA congregation and a member of the Synod's Renewal Table meet with the MET for four sessions.
3. Through study and reflection on the congregation's community, the MET identifies up to three new mission opportunities for the congregation.
4. The MET presents its findings to the Council and Congregation, secures their endorsement, and shares them with the Call Committee.

## **STEP FOUR: CALL COMMITTEE'S TASKS**

1. An Assistant to the Bishop meets with the Call Committee to provide instruction.
2. The Assistant conducts a Ministry Site Profile Workshop to help the congregation develop its future pastoral needs.
3. The Call Committee prepares the Ministry Site Profile and sends it along with the MET's recommendations to the Synod Office.
4. The Call Committee forwards any names of potential candidates it receives to the Synod Office for review and clearance.
5. The Assistant presents names of candidates to the Call Committee.
6. The Call Committee interviews candidates.
7. The Call Committee recommends a candidate for Call and notifies the Congregational President and the Assistant to the Bishop. (*Candidates not chosen are informed, and released from consideration.*)
8. The Call Committee presents its recommendation to the Council.
9. The Council determines the compensation package and calls for a congregational meeting.

## **STEP FIVE: THE CONGREGATION CALLS A PASTOR**

1. A Congregational Meeting is held to approve the calling of the nominated candidate. (*The Assistant to the Bishop is asked to be present to answer any questions.*)
2. A two-thirds vote is required to Call the candidate as Pastor with the proposed compensation package.
3. The candidate is notified of the vote by the Congregational President.
4. The Letter of Call is signed by the Congregation's President and secretary and is sent to the Synod Office.
5. The Bishop approves the compensation package, signs the Letter of Call and mails it to the candidate.

## **STEP SIX: YOUR NEW PASTOR BEGINS**

1. The candidate accepts the Call, and notifies the congregation in writing. (*If the candidate declines the Call, go back to Step Four.*)
2. The Interim Pastor leaves, usually a week before the new pastor arrives.
  - The Assistant to the Bishop conducts an exit interview.
  - A brief farewell service is held on the Interim's last Sunday.
3. The new pastor arrives and begins ministry.
4. The Bishop Installs the new pastor as soon after arrival as possible.
5. The congregation hosts a reception to welcome the new pastor and his/her family.
6. The Assistant to the Bishop will be available for continual support of the congregation and pastor as they begin their new ministry together.