

“Our Rostered Minister is Leaving. Now What?”

(TIM workshop presentation on February 12, 2022)

Whenever a Rostered Minister (Pastor or Deacon) announces their departure from a congregational call, there will be a mixture of thoughts and emotions around the upcoming change in leadership. Synod staff often meet with a congregation’s council soon after such an announcement is made because the council’s leadership during a time of transition plays a big part in how smoothly the change takes place. The following information introduces the overall transition process. When meeting with a council, synod staff can then clarify how the transition process applies to their congregation in particular and answer any questions the council has about the transition.

The purpose of this Together in Mission workshop is to review this Rostered Minister transition process with anyone who is interested in knowing the general overview the process.

Overall process:

The Greater Milwaukee Synod has a “best practices” process to help congregations move through a Rostered Minister (RM) leadership transition. A summary of the process follows below:

1. Ending well with the outgoing pastor

- a. Time for the RM to say good bye to individuals and groups
- b. Handing over/Sharing information (as well as the institutional knowledge that an RM has that may not be written down anywhere.)
- c. An exit Interview with the outgoing RM facilitated by synod staff
- d. Membership and Financial completion forms signed before call ends.
- e. Planning a party/reception/thank you for the outgoing RM
- f. Including a liturgy of Farewell and Godspeed at the last weekend services
- g. Communicating clearly with the congregation along the way

2. Preparing for the interim/transition time

- a. Planning for supply preachers as needed
- b. Connecting with a staff person from the synod office
- c. Identifying the specific ministerial needs during the interim
- d. Determining the finances available to pay an interim/transition rostered minister
- e. Setting up a time to meet with potential interim and/or transition rostered minister
- f. Creating an interim/transition rostered minister covenant

3. Doing a Basic Ministry Assessment (*work can begin on this before or after the interim rostered minister starts in the congregation.*)

- a. Most recent Vision, Mission, and Values statements (*if you have them*)
- b. Current active ministries, both internal and external focused
- c. Current lay leadership positions
 - i. Name, position, and how long in the position
- d. Current staffing
- e. Current participation statistics
 - i. Membership Demographics (*numbers of members, ages, gender, ethnicity, etc*)
 - ii. Average worship attendance for past three years
- f. Current financial picture
 - i. Most recent budget
 - ii. Income sources (*offerings, rental, grants, etc*)
 - iii. Account balances
 - iv. Endowment balance and uses (*if applicable*)
 - v. Other important financial information

4. Vitality and Organizational Structure Assessment

- a. Utilizing the ELCA Vitality Assessment and/or other tools, assessing the viability of the current ministry model, including mission clarity and resources to live into that mission.
- b. Assessing congregational energy
- c. Assessing physical plant (*maintenance costs, needed repairs, space matches needs, etc*)
- d. Determine what you need to work on during this interim time and identify the leadership and process to do the work.

5. Ministry Exploration Team (MET) process (*used when the basic ministry structure is clarified and stable, and the congregation is ready to prepare to call another pastor*)

- a. Facilitated by the interim pastor or transition consultant
- b. There are four basic questions congregations want to be able to answer:
 - i. Who are we?
 - ii. Who is our neighbor?
 - iii. What is God up to internally and externally and how are we called to participate? (What is our specific mission moving forward?)
 - iv. Given the answers to the first three question, how do we articulate the kind of leadership we need at this time?
- c. MET members oversee this work
- d. Involve the congregation along the way
- e. Complete a Ministry Site Profile (MSP) using the data collected in the MET process.
- f. Present the final draft of an MSP to the congregation at a Town Hall Meeting where the bishop and another synod staff member attends.

6. Call Committee

- a. See Call Process Manual, chapters 6-8
- b. Check your congregation's constitution regarding how a call committee gets formed. Be sure you are clear on what your constitution states.
- c. Be clear in communicating with the congregation, what the nomination process for the call committee will be.
- d. A synod representative will lead a call committee orientation.
- e. Create questions for the interviews based on the MSP
- f. Conduct a "practice interview" with a RM from outside the congregation (synod staff can help to identify potential mock interviewees)
- g. Receive names of potential candidates and prepare for interviews
- h. Recommend candidate to council for call

7. Council

- a. Receives call committee recommended name of candidate
- b. Call a congregational meeting as per congregation's constitution
- c. Set a date and time for a Meet and Greet of the candidate with the congregation
- d. Work with synod staff on the compensation package prior to the congregational vote
- e. Hold the vote and sign appropriate call paperwork
- f. Welcome the new Rostered Minister

Please feel free to contact synod staff with any questions or concerns along the way. That is their role. Trust that the Holy Spirit will be part of the process and God will lead and guide the council, call committee and congregation in your discernment.