

“Our Pastor is Leaving. Now What?”
(A meeting with synod staff and council after a pastor has announced they are leaving.)

Regardless the reason that a pastor has announced his or her departure from a congregational call, there will certainly be a mixture of thoughts and emotions around the upcoming change in pastoral leadership. The council’s leadership during this time of transition plays a big part in how smoothly this change takes place. The purpose of a meeting with the council, pastor and synod staff person is to introduce the overall transition process, clarify where to begin, and answer any questions the council has about the upcoming transition soon to take place.

Overall process:

The Greater Milwaukee Synod has created a document with very detailed information about what happens in times of pastoral transition. You can find this document on the synod’s website at www.milwaukeesynod.org and look under the tab “For Congregations” and the Call Process Manual should be one of the first links on the list. In summary, the basic process is the following:

1. Ending well with the outgoing pastor
   a. Saying good bye with individuals and groups
   b. Handing over/Sharing information (as well as the institutional knowledge that a pastor has that may not be written down anywhere.)
   c. An exit Interview with the outgoing pastor facilitated by synod staff
   d. Membership and Financial information communicated and/or handed over
   e. Planning a party/reception/thank you for the outgoing pastor
   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. Working with a staff person from the synod office
   c. Identifying the specific pastoral needs during the interim
   d. Determining the amount of finances available to pay an interim/transition pastor.
   e. Setting up a time to meet with potential interim and/or transition pastors
   f. Creating an interim/transition pastor covenant

3. Ministry Exploration Team (MET) process
   a. Facilitated by the interim pastor or transition consultant
   b. See the Call Process Manual, chapter 5
   c. 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 and how are we called to participate? (What is our specific mission moving forward?)

iv. What kind of pastoral leadership are we looking for to accompany us in this next phase of our ministry and mission?

d. MET members oversee this work

e. Involve the congregation along the way

f. Complete a Ministry Site Profile (MSP) using the data collected in the MET process.

g. Present final draft of the MSP to the congregation at a Town Hall Meeting where the bishop and/or another synod staff members attend.

4. 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”

g. Receive names of potential candidates, prepare for interviews

h. Recommend candidate to council for call

5. 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 and benefits prior to the congregational vote

e. Hold the vote and sign appropriate call paperwork

f. Set up start date

g. Welcome new pastor

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 you in your discernment.