



Congregational Workshop Preparatory to Call Process

This workshop may be led by the Mission District Dean or his/her appointed representative. Congregational council and call committee members should be in attendance, and an invitation to participate should be issued to all members of the congregation. Schedule the workshop at a convenient time to ensure the greatest possible participation. Appoint two recorders to take notes and work together to provide one summary to all participants after the meeting.

Bible Study/Devotion: Divide the participants into small groups and assign each group one of the Bible passages from pages 2-4 of the NALC Call Process Manual.

Have each group read their passage and reflect on what it says about our shared call to ministry as Christians and the Body of Christ. What does this passage tell us about the call of our next pastor? (Make a summary of answers on white-board or newsprint.)

1. How has our ministry been going? What is our current reality? Be honest about strengths and growth areas. (Make a summary list on white-board or newsprint.)
2. What is God calling us to be/to do as a congregation with regard to our ministry? (Make a summary list on white board/newsprint.) Do we have a shared vision for mission? If so, state it as clearly and simply as possible. If not, do we need to spend time visioning before our next pastor is called, or when he/she arrives? How will we make this happen? List action steps.
3. What was the nature of the relationship between our last pastor and the congregation? Positive? Struggling? Cooperative? Tense?
4. How did our congregation work together with our last pastor? An equal partnership? Fruitful? All using their gifts and talents fully?
5. How does leadership happen in our congregation? Is leadership shared/rotated among only a few? Does the council work cooperatively with the pastor? Is leadership exercised by the elected council and pastor? By council officers only? By members outside the council who really control the congregation? Is our leadership model working well? What needs to change for the good of the whole congregation? How can this happen? List action steps.

6. How do we handle conflict/tension in our congregation? Which of the following best describes our congregation?
 - A. As a church, we respect and listen to each other and work things through without generating divisiveness.
 - B. As a church, we try to respect and listen to each other, but it is not uncommon for differences of opinion to be a problem and for some people to choose sides. Some have left our church because of conflict.
 - C. Conflict hurts our sense of unity, but we tend not to talk about it.
 - D. Painful experience with conflict has been present, but it has been worked through, and we have learned from the experience.
 - E. We have had some painful experiences with conflict, and they linger in the background.
 - F. Open conflict is present, and we need a minister who can help us deal with it.
 - G. Other (describe)...

7. How might our congregation prepare for the coming of our next pastor? What needs to change in our congregation to create a healthy, cooperative spirit between pastor and congregation? How can we effect these changes?

8. The NALC is committed to moving away from an institutional understanding of the Church to the biblical commission to be a community of followers of Jesus who focus on being disciples and making disciples. Which best describes your understanding of this movement?

Totally unaware
 Have heard about it
 Have been involved personally
 Some in the congregation are involved, some aren't
 Congregation understands, is on-board and involved

9. What steps are needed to inform/involve the congregation in this Great Commission movement in the NALC? (Brainstorm together.)

10. The four Core Values of the NALC are:

Christ Centered
Mission Driven
Traditionally Grounded
Congregationally Focused

Divide into small groups, with four sheets of paper. Put one Core Value at the top of each sheet. Create a “word-cloud” on each page, with words related to what this Core Value means for your congregation. After the small groups have completed their exercise, summarize them on large sheets of newsprint. What do these say about how the congregation embraces/lives out the four Core Values of the NALC?

The NALC Call Process Manual states:

Calling a pastor is not the equivalent of “hiring an employee.” Many in the congregation will be tempted to think in terms of secular employment: develop a pool of applicants, interview them all, select the best one, and fire them if they don’t work out. The call process is much more relational and covenantal. Calling a pastor is much more like a marriage, and the call process more similar to finding a mate for life. In this sense, going slowly and intentionally, seeking God’s will, and developing a relationship are more important than lining up skills and needs. Keep in mind, not every pastor whom God calls to a particular congregation has all the gifts and skills needed to lead that congregation. But God gives these gifts and skills to those He calls! Few pastors have everything they need when called to a new congregation — but God calls them, then assists them in developing what is needed. Bear in mind, the call of a pastor is open-ended — valid until the pastor may be called elsewhere. In the Lutheran tradition, pastors are not “hired and fired.” Pastors and congregations make a covenantal commitment to one another — to pray for each other, to support and encourage each other, to grow together as needed. It is not unlike, “till death do we part.” The commitment is intended to hold pastor and congregation together through good times and times of challenge.

11. Discuss the notion of “hiring and firing a pastor” vs. “call as covenantal relationship.” Which reflects your congregation’s past understanding and practice? If your congregation has “hired and fired” pastors, what are the negative consequences for the pastor? For the congregation? What are the advantages of fostering an understanding of “call as covenantal relationship”? How can congregation and council move more toward covenantal relationship with regard to your next pastor?

12. The Congregational Profile to be completed by the Call Committee asks for the top five ministry needs with regard to your next pastor. For example, do you most need a “strong biblical preacher” or “one who relates well to all people”? Make a list of all the needs of your congregation with regard to your next pastor. It is helpful if the Call Committee has a list of 10-15 that prime the pump for the congregation’s list plus a blank line for “other”. (List on white-board or newsprint.) Allow each table group to discuss amongst themselves and why those are important. Summarize, group, and edit the list to the top 10 needs. Pass out paper and ask participants to write down their top five, in order from 1 to 5, with 1 being most important.

13. End the workshop by giving every participant the chance to respond to the following questions:

How do you feel about this process?

Was it helpful? Not helpful?

New insights? Any surprises?

Finally, is there anything you wanted to say and haven’t been able to?

Close with prayer/Lord’s Prayer