

DIVINE CALL – HUMAN PROTOCOL  
AN EVALUATION OF CALLING PRACTICES WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

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MEQUON, WISCONSIN

MARCH 7, 2018

## ABSTRACT

God directly called prophets and apostles to proclaim his Word. While God no longer directly calls Christians to proclaim his Word, he still calls individuals to do this work publicly – that is among and on behalf of other believers. The authority to call public ministers of the gospel is now given to the Church. Although this call comes through human hands, it is still divine. However, what is not divine is the protocol which carries out that call. God did not prescribe how the Church must deliberate and decide on calls. Those decisions are left up to believers in Christian freedom. In time, various protocols have developed and are practiced by different church bodies within the Christian Church. This thesis will examine some of those different protocols to identify positive practices and potential pitfalls. After examining the calling practices of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Christian Missionary Alliance, I intend to demonstrate the commonalities these different church bodies share, the concerns some protocol brings, and the safeguards which mitigate those concerns.

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
THE DOCTRINE OF THE CALL .....	2
WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD PRACTICES .....	9
Filling Vacancies from the Field	9
Assigning Candidates into the Ministry	13
Resolving Conflict	14
Evaluation	15
OTHER ECCLESIASTICAL PRACTICES .....	18
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod – Southern Wisconsin District	18
The Roman Catholic Church – Archdiocese of Milwaukee	24
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – Milwaukee Synod	30
Christian Missionary Alliance	40
CONCLUSION.....	45
APPENDIX A – PASTORAL MINISTRY ASSESSMENT .....	49
APPENDIX B – PASTORAL TRANSITIONS – PASTORAL APPRAISAL FORM .....	55
APPENDIX C – FIRST YEAR TRANSITION REVIEW.....	58

BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 60

## INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most exciting day of the year at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is Call Day, the day graduates are informed of where they will begin their pastoral ministry. On this day they are closer than ever to becoming pastors, a task for which they have trained and prepared for years. Perhaps the most exciting phone call a pastor can receive is that he has received a call to a new ministry. When this happens the prospect of moving to a new congregation, a new city, a new state, perhaps even a new country is now before him. He must evaluate his present ministry along with the new potential ministry and consider where it is best for him to serve at this time. His decision will affect not only himself but also his entire family. Clearly, the call and assignment processes are filled with emotion and significance.

Any new member to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) will tell you the call system is vastly different from employment protocol in the secular world. In businesses, employees are hired and fired; they interview and can move or switch jobs at their own discretion. The idea of being told where to live and work after graduation or being less able to move or change job locations freely is uncommon. Yet, this is how the WELS calling and assignment system operates. Why the difference?

The Christian church has been commissioned by God to carry out his work. He has given directives to establish who may serve as leaders in the church to guide and equip Christians as they go about this work. However, God has not commanded a specific process to select or appoint those leaders; the church has freedom in this area.

Many different methods have evolved over time, all reaching the end goal of a congregation having a spiritual leader. Each method shows what is emphasized and valued by those using it. This invites the question, “What method is best?” This thesis will address that question. I will begin by examining Scripture and establishing the doctrine of the call. I will then examine current WELS call and assignment practices. After that I will examine the practices of four different church bodies: the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Christian Missionary Alliance. After each examination I will evaluate and identify beneficial practices and procedures which may potentially cause problems. With this thesis on calling practices within the Christian church I intend to demonstrate the commonalities different church bodies share, the concerns some protocol brings, and the safeguards which mitigate those concerns.

## THE DOCTRINE OF THE CALL

Any study of calling practices must first begin with a detailed and scriptural examination of the doctrine of the call. The call to the public ministry is considered to be a divine call. Dr. John Brug concurs with this statement when he writes, “[The call to the office of preaching] is not to be regarded as a human, political arrangement, but as a divine ordinance.”<sup>1</sup> This task of preaching his Word can be traced all the way back to the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3:15 God gave the first gospel promise which was to be handed down from generation to generation. This was done by ministerial work in its elementary understanding. Genesis 4:26 goes one step further. It says, “At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD” (NIV). Interpreters

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1. John F. Brug, *The Ministry of the Word* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2009), 67.

understand this passage to describe the proclamation of the first gospel promise given in the Garden.<sup>2</sup> Seth and his descendants worshiped publicly and proclaimed who the LORD was and what he was going to do for mankind. All these examples emphasize the gift of the gospel. By giving the gospel promise to mankind, God was establishing the ministry of the gospel. With God as the originator of the gospel itself, the proclamation of it also comes from God.

Proclaiming the gospel is the life of all Christians by nature. John Schaller writes, “God creates his Christians for himself in such a way that they, prompted by their new nature, preach the gospel.”<sup>3</sup>

Within the gospel ministry done by all Christians, the office of the public ministry exists. This ministry is given to individuals called through the church to serve among and on behalf of other believers. Thus, in their work these public ministers represent the church. God clearly establishes the public ministry in Scripture. 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 list the necessary qualifications to serve in the public ministry. God gives ministers to the church as Ephesians 4:11-13 says, “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” The public ministry is distinct from the ministry given to all believers. The function of both forms of ministry is the same – preach God’s Word and administer the sacraments – but the public ministry requires a call from fellow believers to serve on their behalf.

God directly called individuals to do his work. In the Old Testament God called Abraham from Harran to go to a land he would show him (Genesis 12). God called Moses through a

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2. For more information on this discussion, see Heinrich J. Vogel’s essay “Calling on the Name of the Lord.” It can be found in the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay Files.

3. John Schaller, “The Origin and Development of the New Testament Ministry,” in *Wauwatosa Theology: Vol. 3* (Milwaukee, Northwestern Publishing House, 1997), 75.

burning bush to lead his people out of Egypt (Exodus 3). God called Aaron and his sons to serve as priests in his tabernacle (Exodus 28). God chose Elisha to succeed Elijah as prophet for his people (1 Kings 19). God chose Ezekiel to address the Israelites and warn them of coming destruction (Ezekiel 2). Numerous other examples are available in the Old Testament.

God directly called individuals into the ministry in the New Testament as well. Jesus directly called his twelve apostles (Luke 6). Jesus sent out seventy-two disciples ahead of him into the towns of Galilee (Luke 10). Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus and commissioned him to be a missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 9). Even Jesus himself was called to the work he did as shown in Hebrews 5:5. “In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father.’” The Bible is filled with many instances of individuals being called directly by God.

However, God no longer calls ministers in the same way. Rev. G. Diehl expounds on this idea in his essay.

The divine agency in investing men with the sacred office, since the age of miracles is past, although real, is not so immediate and direct as it was in the call of the prophets. The manner and circumstances are different now. No angelic appearance in the flame; no burning bush; no heavenly voice from the midst of the flame of fire, calling the subject by name; no audible utterance, “Thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you”; not as Moses was called; not as Paul was; not as Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Daniel and Elisha. God does not now speak in audible sounds to those who are called. He does not call them by name. He employs no miraculous circumstances. There is no communion by angels; no supernatural visions; no heaven-inspired dreams by which men are clearly informed of the divine vocation. They are called and clothed with the functions of the ministry by other means.<sup>4</sup>

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4. G. Diehl, “The Divine and Human Factors in the Call to the Ministerial Office, according to the Older Lutheran Authorities,” in *First Free Lutheran Diet in America* (Philadelphia: J. Frederick Smith, Publisher, 1878), 299-300.



Although using different means, God still calls servants into his ministry. A number of passages make this sufficiently clear. On the Apostle Paul's third missionary journey when traveling back to Jerusalem he stopped in Miletus to meet with the elders of the church in Ephesus. He encouraged them with these words, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Ac 20:28). Paul tells the elders that God the Holy Spirit had placed them where they were as overseers of the church.

Another instructive passage comes in the letter to the Ephesians. Paul is encouraging unity in the body of believers in view of what God has done in his act of salvation. Here he is distinguishing some different roles in the body of Christ. "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph 4:11-12). Paul here, as in Acts 20, points out that it is God himself who provides pastors for his people. Schaller too recognizes that these individuals are given by God to his church to do his work. "In the Christian church God recognized the bishops, elders, pastors, and teachers, who admittedly were chosen by congregations, as divinely called, as gifts given to the congregation by God."<sup>5</sup>

God provides for his church by choosing men to serve as pastors. Some historically believed that the office of pastor only arose out of a need for leadership in the church.<sup>6</sup> They believed that the church was adapting to its situations and began calling leaders for the sake of organization. However, the passages laid out above say there is more involved than that. They clearly state that God and his Spirit provide the church with leaders and pastors. Schaller writes,

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5. Schaller, 92.

6. Brug, *Ministry of the Word*, 121.

“Whatever the Christian congregation decides upon to further the preaching of the gospel it does at the instigation and under the guidance of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”<sup>7</sup> Many more passages can be used to support this teaching of the divinity of the call, but an explanation of all these passages is not necessary at this time.<sup>8</sup>

The divinity of the call into the ministry is clear. However, God has entrusted the process of this calling to human beings. As was pointed out above, God no longer speaks directly to individuals, but through the church. “The call comes from heaven, but it must be recognized by the Church.”<sup>9</sup> God has given the church the authority to call leaders and pastors to serve in its midst. Titus 1:5 supports this teaching. Paul is giving directions to Titus when he writes, “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.” This is one way the church can carry out the direction given by God to spread the gospel throughout the world.

The task of taking the gospel to the world is not optional. God has commanded his entire church to “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20). This directive is not only for pastors but for the entire Christian church. C.F.W. Walther writes in his thesis *The Proper Form of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Independent of the State*, “It is the duty of the congregation carefully to see to it that the Word of God may richly dwell and have full and free scope in its midst.”<sup>10</sup>

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7. Schaller, 94.

8. These passages include Jer 3:15; Jn 20:22; Ro 10:15; 1 Co 12:28; 2 Co 5:18; 2 Ti 2:2; and Tit 1:5.

9. Diehl, 300.

10. C.F.W. Walther, *Walther and the Church*, ed. Wm. Dallmann, W.H.T. Dau, and Th. Engelder (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), 91.

God has established the call into the ministry; however, the current protocol is left to the church's judgment. God leaves the exact details and practice of how they will carry out the Great Commission through the divine call up to the church. In whatever way this is done, God demands that it be orderly. Walther references 1 Corinthians 14:40 when he writes, "It is the duty of the congregation to see that in its midst all things be done decently and in order."<sup>11</sup> When things are disorderly, tasks are left unaccomplished and people may end up lost or confused. With good order comes a better hope that goals will be reached. Assuming that the church follows good order, it is free to establish its own forms. Brug explains:

The divine institution of such forms does not depend on God providing the church with a list of the specific forms it must establish but on God granting the church the authority to establish such forms. God did not command the individual offices. He authorized them. Since these offices flow from authority which God has delegated to the church, it is proper to say that they are instituted by God.<sup>12</sup>

Brug illustrates this by pointing to government.<sup>13</sup> God has made it clear in Scripture that he established government (Ro 13:1). However, God does not decree what style of government should be used. Peter instructs people to submit to whatever government is ruling. "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right" (1 Pe 2:13-14). During the time of Jesus and the apostles the Roman Empire was ruled by a single emperor. In the United States we live under a constitutional federal republic. Both are permissible assuming they carry out the duty of government – to ensure safety and order for its citizens. Man is free to select the form of government after God established it.

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11. Walther, 93.

12. Brug, *Ministry of the Word*, 82.

13. Brug, *Ministry of the Word*, 85.

The same is true for the church. God has established the call into the ministry, but the church decides on the forms.

One form of election to the ministry is demonstrated in Acts 1. The apostles and 120 other believers gathered together to elect someone to replace Judas Iscariot. They worked together to choose two candidates that could serve well in that role. Diehl notes, “It is necessary to observe in the history of the apostles, that sometimes the ministers and the rest of the congregation jointly elected whom they thought worthy of the sacred office.”<sup>14</sup> Following this biblical example in current protocol is encouraged.

Christ himself gave the ministry of the keys to the church. When speaking to Peter in Matthew 16:19, Jesus says, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Therefore, the keys is the power Christ gave to his church to forgive those who repent, but to refuse to forgive those who do not repent. The church now can entrust the keys to others. Brug explains, “The right of congregations to appoint ministers is implied in their possession of the keys. They can entrust to others only what has been entrusted to them... Christians can authorize others to use the keys on their behalf since the keys were entrusted to them, and God has given the church the authority to call ministers.”<sup>15</sup> They do this by choosing individuals to serve as pastors and use the keys on their behalf in their congregation.

Since the church was given the keys, it has the authority to designate people to use them on their behalf. An individual only receives this responsibility when he accepts a call. The church must call him to serve in this capacity. Brug writes, “No one may assume the functions of

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14. Diehl, 306.

15. Brug, *Ministry of the Word*, 154.

the public ministry on his own initiative. The only valid way to enter any form of this ministry is through a call from Christ through the church.”<sup>16</sup>

Although no longer directly, God still calls individuals into the public ministry through the church. Scripture makes this clear. Therefore, a call from a congregation to a pastor can rightly be called divine.

## WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD PRACTICES

After establishing the scriptural basis for the call, I will move on to how this doctrine is carried out in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). The current process for congregations to receive a pastor is done through the calling system. This system can take a couple different shapes. The WELS is divided into twelve districts across the United States each of which is overseen by a district president. To learn about the WELS calling system, I interviewed six of the twelve district presidents during the month of October, 2017.

### **Filling Vacancies from the Field**

When a congregation is left without a pastor, most often the position is filled by an active pastor from a different congregation in the WELS. The process of finding this pastor involves the president of the district in which that church is located.

The first step often involves a pre-call meeting in which the district president visits the congregation. The purpose of this meeting is two-fold – to teach the doctrine and practice of the call and to solicit feedback from the congregation as to their specific ministry needs. The

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16. Brug, *Ministry of the Word*, 147.

feedback he receives gives him an idea of the “flavor” of that congregation, community, and setting. He also spends some time with the congregation’s leadership to try and get a good picture of what their ministry is like, what kind of particular things they need, what specific opportunities they have in front of them, and an idea of their community.

Some district presidents make use of surveys containing open-ended questions the congregation and its leadership can complete. This helps clarify the desired pastoral abilities and gifts and gives the district president a perception of congregation life.

At this pre-call meeting the congregation is able to suggest candidates. The district president will explore these suggestions as he looks for suitable candidates. However, he may not include these individuals on the list of candidates he presents to the congregation at the call meeting because of information he is privy to or synod guidelines which are discussed below.

Another option for the congregation is to request a graduate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. In this situation, the district president must first ask himself, “Is this a good place for a graduate?” “Yes,” will not always be the answer to that question. For example, if a congregation is experiencing a great deal of division or conflict, a pastor with more experience may be necessary. It is up to the discretion of the assignment committee as to whether or not the congregation could be assigned for a graduate. The assignment committee and the process of assigning graduates to congregations is explained in detail later.

From here, the district president plays a large part. Using the information he collected in the pre-call meeting, he looks at pastors currently serving across the synod to see if some of them would fit this congregation. He does this by accessing a restricted database only available to district presidents which contains information on all the approximately 1,450 pastors in the WELS. Along with biographical information and ministerial history, this database contains a

profile of each pastor. During every pastor's time at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, a characterization profile is produced. This profile is discussed at length later in the paper.

The database also contains the pastor's annual self-assessment profiles in which he rates himself in a number of different areas. He documents his ability and any experience he has had in a wide scope of areas: leadership, administration, organ, Spanish, Hebrew, Greek, preaching, teaching, Bible studies for youth, Bible studies for adults, working with youth groups, visitations, shut-ins, training laity for leadership, etc. In all these different areas he rates his ability on a scale of zero to five, zero being low and five being high. Then he goes through again and rates his preference in all of these areas from zero to five. For example, a pastor can rate his ability at a five in administration but his preference at a one. This says that he has gifts in administration but does not enjoy that type of work.

At least once a year every pastor is asked to maintain and update his online profile. He then sends the updates to his circuit pastor who is encouraged to sit down with him and go over his comments. They can assess whether he is underestimating or overestimating his abilities in certain areas. The idea of the circuit pastor is to temper the assessment that is provided by the pastor himself.

The district president sifts through this information, searching for pastors who could potentially serve the vacant congregation. Using the database he is able to search through the pastors using the different categories and ratings. For example, he could search for all pastors who rated themselves as a five in evangelism for both ability and preference. He can also look outside the database for more information. If there is a pastor he wants to know more about, he can call the district president of the congregation he is currently serving. The Conference of Presidents maintains a high level of openness and trust with each other, so if one district

president asks about a pastor in another's district, he will get a candid and straightforward response.

The WELS also follows duration guidelines when extending calls to pastors. If a pastor has accepted a call to serve in a new ministry, he will not normally be available to receive a new call in the first four years of that ministry. If a pastor has declined a call to serve in a new ministry, he will not normally be available for another call for six months. These guidelines help insure a pastor's current ministry is not overly disrupted by continuous calls to new ministries.

With all these tools at his disposal, the district president works to create a list of potential pastors for the vacant congregation. When this list is completed, he holds a call meeting with the congregation. If not done in the pre-call meeting, he gives some instruction on the doctrine and practice of the call. In some cases the call document is read so the congregation knows exactly what they are asking their new pastor to do. Here is one example of the process followed in a call meeting: listing of specific gifts identified at the pre-call meeting and in surveys, presenting the call list, formally accepting the list, discussing the candidates, breaking for individual discussion, making other comments or asking other questions, praying, balloting for several rounds, making the call unanimous, recessing the meeting, and receiving the blessing. By the end of the meeting the congregation will have selected one of the candidates on the presented list to whom they will extend a call.

At this point the called pastor is contacted and given the information about the new call he has just received. He now deliberates the two calls he holds – one to his current field of labor and another to the congregation who just called him. These deliberations typically take about four weeks and involve the pastor talking to friends, family, mentors, his current congregation, and the congregation newly calling him. This is a time for a pastor to reflect on his gifts and



abilities and where he can best use them for God's kingdom. Prayer is also a large part of this process, as the pastor asks for the Lord's guidance and blessing on his decision. Ultimately, it is his decision which call to accept and which to decline.

If the pastor declines the vacant congregation's call, the process repeats. The district president presents another list which may include unchosen names from the previous list, and the congregation chooses another candidate to whom they extend a call.

### **Assigning Candidates into the Ministry**

The process for assigning seminary graduates into the ministry differs from the process outlined above. It begins in the spring of every year, a couple months before graduation and call day at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. In April all twelve district presidents receive a book of information about the graduates of the Seminary. This book has a profile approved by the Seminary faculty on every graduate detailing his gifts and abilities. It also contains a report written by the supervising pastor who oversaw the student during the third year of Seminary training while he served as a vicar. The district presidents study this book and "get to know" all the graduates. They can also seek more information about specific graduates if they would like more information.

When the time for assignment comes near the end of May, the twelve district presidents meet as an assignment committee, each having with them all the information on the congregations requesting a graduate. The assignment committee also includes the president, vice presidents, and secretary of the synod along with other advisory members – other synod officers, world and home mission personnel, and representatives from all synodical ministerial education schools, including representatives from the Seminary faculty. After beginning with prayer, the

work of assigning graduates to congregations begins. As a way to organize the discussion, the district presidents take turns nominating a graduate for a congregation in his district. When a district president makes a nomination, he does so knowing the culture and needs of each vacant congregation as well as the gifts and abilities of each graduate. That nomination is then discussed by the group. Another president can counter that nomination by suggesting that graduate for a congregation in his district because he believes that graduate's gifts and abilities fit the needs and culture of his congregation. After discussing the initial nomination, the whole group votes on where that graduate will serve. If the initial nomination is voted down, the same district president then nominates a new graduate because it is still his turn. This process is then repeated until all the graduates have been assigned. At this point the district presidents take a break and step away from the list of assignments. When they return, the list is read again to ensure everyone agrees. If everyone agrees, they unanimously vote to assign the graduates to the listed congregations.

It must be noted that this assignment process is all done prayerfully. The district presidents begin and end the assignment meeting with prayer asking God to use this process to accomplish his purposes.

### **Resolving Conflict**

Because pastors and congregations are both sinful, sometimes conflicts will arise between the two. If necessary, the district president with the help of the circuit pastor can help to resolve the conflict. However, they are only advisory. They do not have authority to act unless someone is guilty of a scandalous life, willful neglect of duty, or persistent adherence to false doctrine. If this is the case, the district president investigates the matter and seeks repentance. He may have to eventually suspend the pastor from the WELS ministerium and lead the congregation to

rescind the pastor's call. If the pastor's inability to perform duties of the office is established, the district president may lead the congregation to seek the pastor's resignation.

If there is no public sin, false doctrine, or neglect of duty but still conflict, the issue often arises from dissatisfaction from the congregation or unfaithfulness from the pastor. In both cases the district president and circuit pastor seek to be pastors for the pastor and congregation. If the congregation is being unloving or harsh, the district president may remind them that a pastor is a gift from God and these attitudes are despising that gift. If the issue lies with the pastor – perhaps he needs to be more diligent in certain areas or does not have the gifts to be able to serve – then, they will work with the pastor asking questions like, “Here are complaints that are surfacing. How do you handle these issues? Do you need to be a better listener? Do you need to show more empathy, caring, and compassion? Do you need to put more time into your sermons? Are you slacking off and spending too much time on personal things? Are you pouring yourself into the ministry enough?” Sometimes these deficiencies can be remedied. Real problems arise when pastors are obstinate, refusing to acknowledge some of these shortcomings and work on them.

Every situation is different and calls for the district president's prudence and patient instruction. He seeks to help congregations and pastors resolve conflicts internally with patient love and understanding.

### **Evaluation**

After explaining the process of filling vacant congregations, assigning graduates, and resolving conflict, I will highlight both positive practices and potential problem areas. Many positives are evident in the WELS calling system. This protocol removes human elements as much as possible which encourages both congregations and pastors to trust that calls come from God through his

people. It also closely mirrors the procedure used by the early Christian church in Acts 1 – establishing qualifications, listing candidates, and making a decision.<sup>17</sup>

It is also beneficial that district presidents take the responsibility of searching for candidates. Working with a pastoral heart for the calling congregation, the congregation whose pastor is being called, and the pastor himself, the district presidents ensure that the entire church body is being cared for. Having each congregation make use of its own search committee could cause tension and strife within the synod.

Additionally, WELS protocol fosters a sense of trust between the congregations, district presidents, and pastors receiving calls. The congregations trust the district presidents to know the ministerium of the synod and provide a good list of candidates from which they can choose a pastor to call. The district presidents trust the congregations to provide them with accurate and honest information about themselves and their situation and to make the final decision about whom they will call. The congregations and district presidents trust the pastors receiving calls to faithfully assess their gifts, abilities, and ministries and to make the decision about which call to accept. This level of trust demonstrates Christian love and fosters an attitude of unity within the synod.

While many positives exist in WELS calling protocol, there is the potential that some procedures may be problematic. When a graduate comes out of the Seminary, a lot of unbiased, objective information is provided to the district presidents. This information comes to them from the faculties of the synodical schools after years of observation and interaction. That information is extremely beneficial for understanding the unique gifts and abilities of each graduate.

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17. While nearly all translations suggest this decision was made by casting lots, the option of this decision being made by ballots is entirely possible. For an exegetical brief on this issue, see “Exegetical Brief Acts 1:26—Lottery Or Election?” by John F. Brug.

However, over time that individual will grow and change, and not all the information provided at graduation will still be accurate. The annual self-assessments completed by each pastor help keep that profile up to date, but because that is a self-evaluation, much of that information is subjective. The circuit pastor helps to validate the self-assessment, but the subjective nature still remains. Also, in some situations the circuit pastor may not be able to comment on all aspects of the assessment if he is unfamiliar with that aspect of the pastor's ministry. If the information provided by the pastor in his annual self-assessment is slightly inflated or deflated and is not corrected by the circuit pastor, the information at the district presidents' disposal may be inaccurate.

Other than making use of a purely hierarchical authority to assign called workers, it must be admitted that these potential problems with self-evaluations are inevitable. This underscores the need and value of making sincere prayers for honesty and transparency a major part of the calling process.

Another potential danger is possible. Many times members of congregations, especially relatively new members who are less familiar with WELS protocol, still feel agitated when their pastor receives a call from another calling body. This "danger" too is unavoidable and points to the ongoing need and value of educating members about the process and the benefits that come with it despite periodic discomfort. It also reminds us to rejoice with those who rejoice and grieve with those who grieve, even when called workers inevitably come and go from places of ministry.

In spite of the few potential problem areas, WELS calling protocol faithfully provides the church with pastors to carry out the public ministry in a way which promotes Christian love and fellowship and minimizes selfishness and pride. The dedicated work of district presidents and

synod officials ensure the WELS remains true to God's Word and effective in its calling procedures.

## OTHER ECCLESIASTICAL PRACTICES

After detailing the WELS calling and assignment system, I will move on to explaining and evaluating the practices of other church bodies. This paper examines four church bodies and their calling/assignment/interview protocol: the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod – Southern Wisconsin District, the Roman Catholic Church – Archdiocese of Milwaukee, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – Greater Milwaukee Synod, and the Christian Missionary Alliance. All four church bodies use slightly different methods as detailed below. Each section describes their practices in three different areas – filling vacancies, assigning new candidates, and resolving conflict. Each section also contains an evaluation of their methods which identifies beneficial practices and potential problem areas.

### **The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod – Southern Wisconsin District**

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LC—MS) uses a system much like the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod to supply parishes with pastors. To find out more about their practices, I interviewed Rev. Dr. John Wille who serves as the President of the Southern Wisconsin District on November 27, 2017. Because of their confessional history and similar backgrounds, the LC—MS and WELS practices are similar in many ways as demonstrated below.

### Filling Vacancies from the Field

When a congregation becomes vacant, the first step is to find a vacancy pastor in the area who can serve them. One difference from the WELS is the use of “intentional interims.” These pastors are specially-trained in conflict resolution, establishing vision, and strategic planning, and are used during a difficult pastoral transition. The district president may recommend that a congregation request an intentional interim when a long pastorate ends or the congregation is extremely conflicted. The Intentional Interim Ministry website gives more information about this approach.

In every congregation there will be times when members wrestle with their church's identity and ministry. These unique transitions occur after particularly long pastorates, when conflicts exist within the congregation, when there are instances of pastoral misbehavior, when demographics change drastically, or during other church-changing circumstances.

Such times of transition are often marked by congregational stress and anxiety hampering ministry and making a fulfilling church experience difficult.

Intentional Interim Ministry is designed to restore congregational health by offering a safe bridge between challenging times and the selection of the next resident pastor.<sup>18</sup>

All the situations described above are far from uncommon. Thus, this type of ministry would be extremely useful in the church.

Next, the congregation completes a self-study. This multi-layered process involves recording its basic information, its demographics, its church history, its vision, and its directives for the future. Not only does this self-assessment assist the district president in his work, but it also gives guidance for the congregation moving forward.

The district president, using this self-assessment, searches for pastors who would fit this particular church and setting. He has access to information on all of the approximately 12,000

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18. <http://interimministryLC—MS.org/>, accessed December 5, 2017.

active pastors in the LC—MS. Every pastor has a PIF and a SET. The PIF (Pastor Information File) gives information about himself, his ministry history, things he has done in the church, ministry habits, etc. This form with twelve to eighteen questions is typically completed by the district president or circuit visitor. The SET (Self Evaluation Tool) consists of thirty-nine questions which the pastor answers about himself: his beliefs, his ministry, his preferred ministry location, how he practices certain things, his ministry style, etc. The PIFs and SETs for all LC—MS pastors are kept in a secure database which the district presidents can access when they are investigating names for a call list.

The congregation also has opportunity to nominate names for the call list. The district president vets these names to determine if any would be a good fit for this congregation. After he has adequately searched for pastors, he compiles a list of twelve to twenty-five names to present to the congregation at the call meeting. The meeting opens with a devotion based on the call process and continues with a discussion about the dynamics of the call. Because the congregation has the right and responsibility to call, after some discussion they vote on whom they will call.

Just as in the WELS, the called pastor prayerfully deliberates the call over some time. Eventually, he decides which call to accept, the one he had been previously holding or the new one he received. If he declines the new call, the congregation can select another individual from the previous call list or request more names. This process continues until someone has accepted the call.

### Training and Assigning Graduates

The LC—MS pastoral training system is very similar to the WELS worker training system. Men complete a college degree often from one of the nine colleges run by the LC—MS. Each man



must then complete a pre-seminary interview with the district in which he find himself. They can then move on to one of the two seminaries in the LC—MS, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, or Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN. Sometime during their training, the seminary conducts an evaluation which involves a psychological profile and a FBI background check. The student is also asked personal questions such as, “Why do you want to become a pastor?” The district interview and seminary evaluation both seek to learn more about the student’s personality and unique gifts and abilities. Along with the formal evaluation, the student is constantly being evaluated during his time at the seminary regarding his suitability, strengths, and weaknesses. That information is eventually passed on to the district presidents.

Much like the WELS, at graduation time all the districts presidents come and serve on an assignment committee. Using the profiles vacant churches developed, they seek to pair the strengths and weaknesses of students with the specific needs of congregations. One difference in the LC—MS process is that some students will be interviewed to assess if they could serve in a specific large and complex congregation. The seminary works together with the district president and these large, multi-staff ministries to ensure the graduate being assigned there fits in the culture of the congregation. The graduates do not seek out these interviews but are invited participants. The district presidents work through the list of graduates and vacancies until all the graduates have been placed into their first field of labor.

### Conflict between Pastor and Congregation

When conflicts arise, the LC—MS works with both the pastor and congregation to resolve the issue. The course of action will vary in every situation but goes one of two ways depending on where the root of the issue lies. The first scenario is when the pastor is not fulfilling the

responsibilities of his call. In that case, the congregation in conjunction with the district president has the right to call the pastor to repentance. If the problem persists, the congregation has the right to dismiss him if done on well-founded scriptural principles. If the congregation is in the wrong, then it is the district president's responsibility to call that congregation to repentance. This is done through a series of visitations by the district president to the congregation and its leadership. If the congregation refuses to repent, there are processes to suspend a congregation for cause.

If the conflict is of a lesser degree, the district president can recommend the use of trained reconcilers. The Ambassadors of Reconciliation is an organization headquartered in Montana which trains reconcilers in conflict resolution and reconciliation specifically within the parish. Their website outlines their mission, purpose, and approach.

Ambassadors of Reconciliation is an international ministry founded to help Christians and their churches in carrying out their peacemaking responsibilities as Christ's ambassadors. Our mission is equipping Christians and their churches for living, proclaiming and cultivating lifestyles of reconciliation.

The ministry of reconciliation is given to the local church and every believer. Our purpose is to inspire and prepare the leaders of Christ's church around the world to carry out this vocation in more effective ways.

Ambassadors of Reconciliation is an independent, non-profit corporation. Our approach is based upon the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.<sup>19</sup>

Because both pastor and parishioners are sinful human beings, conflicts will arise. This ministry then proves to be invaluable.

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19. <https://www.hisaor.org/web-content/AboutUs.html>, accessed December 5, 2017.

## Evaluation

After describing the calling and assignment practices of the LC—MS, I will now bring out particularly beneficial practices and potential problem areas. There are many things to appreciate in LC—MS practices. The “Intentional Interim” ministry is very useful in stopping conflict before it begins. Some situations in ministry are more likely to give rise to issues, especially when a congregation is in a pastoral transition. These pastors help the congregation not only through issues but also toward a future vision and goal.

Similarly, using the Ambassadors of Reconciliation is a good practice which helps defuse tense situations. In the WELS this job is usually handled by circuit pastors or district presidents. Having a ministry like this in WELS may prove to be helpful to these men as they carry out that responsibility.

While there are positives in LC—MS practices, it is conceivable that some things may lead to problems. The interviews of some graduates may lead congregations to exclude the district president when filling future vacancies. If they are able to interview graduates directly in this situation, the desire to interview candidates already serving as pastors may arise. If nothing else, this practice seems to create an inconsistency in practice. Why have interviews for graduates to make sure they fit into a congregation’s culture and not have interviews for ordained ministers to make sure they fit into a congregation’s culture? The better practice may be to rely on the congregational profiles and the work of the district presidents when assigning graduates. The issue may lie in the assessment of the congregation. If the congregation is truly large and complex enough where the traditional practices do not adequately assess the culture, needs, and vision, perhaps a more in depth analysis is necessary. This will eliminate the inconsistency in practice while still providing additional evaluation for complex congregations.

### **The Roman Catholic Church – Archdiocese of Milwaukee**

The Roman Catholic Church takes an entirely different route in filling parishes with ministers of the gospel. Instead of a congregation issuing a call and a pastor deciding whether or not to accept this new call, the priest is assigned to a congregation by an archbishop. On November 10, 2017, I interviewed Mr. Richard Tank of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee to gain further insight into Roman Catholic practices. Mr. Tank serves as the Director of Priest and Lay Ecclesial Personnel and Placement Director of Personnel Services; thus, he is intimately involved with the placement of priests into parishes.

#### **Priest Placement Process**

In the Archdiocese of Milwaukee the Archbishop makes all appointments. However, he makes use of a Priest Placement Board to assist him with this process. This is not always necessary. In fact, in some smaller dioceses the archbishop does this work entirely on his own. In Milwaukee the Priest Placement Board is used to help ensure that the best possible fit is achieved between the parish and priest.<sup>20</sup> The Board is made up of ten members: six elected priests, one Hispanic priest representative, one urban ministry priest, and two ex officio members, one of which being the Director.

Priests are placed in parishes for six-year terms which are renewable once. Thus, at the least, every priest is being relocated every twelve years. However, every year a segment of the priesthood reaches the twelve-year mark in their terms, so every year some priests are moving.

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20. The Director of Priest and Lay Ecclesial Personnel and Placement and the Priest Placement Board works with more entities. They also work with parish directors. However, in this paper I will only be talking about priest placement. Realize more work is done than in just this area.

Therefore, the Priest Placement Board goes through an annual placement cycle called the Open Listing Process.

This process begins in early fall when it is determined what priests will be up for reassignment and what parishes will be vacant. This happens either by a priest completing his term, a priest completing a special assignment outside the diocese, or a priest retiring. All priests are given the opportunity to put themselves forward as a candidate for reassignment by filling out their Personnel Report. This document enables the priest to express his current level of contentment in his ministry location. In November, priests completing their first term are consulted regarding reassignment.

After the Archbishop compiles a list of parishes that will be vacant in the coming year, an Open Listing is prepared and published in January. This list is sent out to all priests in the Archdiocese. Priests that will be up for reassignment are encouraged to examine the Open Listing. These priests also go through an interview process with the Board of Priest Placement in which the Board will be looking for information about their goals, their comfort level in certain ministries, and what they feel would be the best kind of assignment for them based on the Open Listing.

At the same time, consultations begin with parishes that will receive a new priest. The Director of Priest Placement goes out and conducts a two-hour session with the parish council leadership and the staff of the parish often in three or four small groups. Along with receiving a summary of parish data reports and a parish profile which is written by the staff and council, he conducts a parish consultation dialogue with them. In this dialogue he gives information about the priest placement process and asks them questions about what they are looking for in a priest. This is done by using the Parish Leadership Consultation form which asks about their goals for

the parish, what they want to change, their greatest fears, their greatest excitements, what qualities they want in their next priest, and what they can do to help the transition process. After this consultation is completed, the pertinent information is made available to all the priests looking for a new assignment, so they can find out what each parish is seeking.

Later in the timeline, in March and April, the Priest Placement Board attempts to match the individual priests with the parishes available. The Board works to find each priest a position which matches his skills and abilities by reviewing all gathered data on both the priest and parish. Once they match each priest with a vacant parish, these selections go to the Archbishop as recommendations. He then discusses the data and selections with the Board, but ultimately, it is the Archbishop who makes the final decision. He is able to change placements of the Board's recommendation if he sees fit. In late April the Archbishop makes his final decision, and priests are informed of the appointments. Official letters are sent out detailing these appointments, and they are published in *Catholic Herald*.

#### Education and Assignment of Prospective and Newly-Ordained Priests

The process of becoming a newly ordained priest involves schooling and practical experience. Men who would like to become a priest must first complete a college program followed by four years of seminary theological training. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee makes use of St. Francis Seminary and Sacred Heart School of Theology. During their years in the seminary they are assigned to a parish so they have an opportunity to get to know a congregation well and learn about the priesthood. Other opportunities to gain exposure include archdiocesan events, special masses, and serving as a transitional deacon during their last year.

After graduation and ordination the new priests remain in the ten-county area of Southeastern Wisconsin for appointment. The Archbishop may decide some graduates should receive additional specialized training. These men could go right from ordination to a school in Rome for several years. Another option for extra schooling is The School of Canon Law at the Catholic University of America in Washington DC. After completing this training, the priests return to the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

Newly ordained priests generally start off as an associate for at least three years. Ideally, they would serve two individual three-year terms at different locations, but because of the shortage of priests they are often asked to take an administrative position in their third or fourth year. One option that the Board uses after this first three-year term is to assign them as an associate of a priest serving two parishes. The young priest would likely focus on one of those parishes. In this way he is able to gain experience while being under the guidance of an experienced priest. It is possible that in the next year he would take on responsibility for one or both of those parishes.

In addition to the three-year associate terms, newly ordained priests also go through an assessment process with the head priest at their parish sometime during their first year of ministry. The Pastoral Ministry Assessment form is used to facilitate this discussion (see Appendix A for a copy of the form). Both men fill out the same form, the priest evaluating the associate and the associate doing a self-evaluation. Parts one and two of the form ask about what energizes and drains the associate in order to uncover what might become his passions in ministry. Part three asks for competency ratings between one and four in different areas of ministry: leadership and pastoral effectiveness, administrative competence, leading prayer and worship, personal and spiritual maturity, and commitment to the church and justice. Part four

looks at what the associate has been exposed to in his ministry so far and asks for a recommendation on whether additional experience is needed. These areas of exposure include such things as finance and budgeting, counseling, recordkeeping, visitation of the sick, wedding ministry, etc. The form concludes with a summary of the associate's strengths and areas needing refinement or further training as well as goals for further strengthening. This assessment process is in place to ensure the newly ordained priest is thriving in his ministry and learning more about himself and where his personal gifts and abilities lie.

#### Conflict between Priest and Parish

Inevitably, while living in a sinful world conflicts arise between the priest and parish. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee uses several methods to prevent or quell these conflicts. In an effort to prevent future conflicts from happening and to assess the beginning of a pastorate, the Priest and Lay Ecclesial Personnel and Placement Office facilitates a First Year Pastoral Transition Review Process during the first six to nine months of initial placement. This process can take a few different shapes.

A more formal approach consists of two meetings, one between the Director and the priest and a second between the Director and the parish council and staff. The purpose of both meetings is to discuss how smoothly or difficultly the transition is going. In the meeting with the parish council and staff the Pastoral Transitions – Pastoral Appraisal Form (see Appendix B for a copy of the form) is distributed for them to fill out immediately. This questionnaire enables the parish leaders to rate the priest from one to five in areas such as leading worship, preaching, leadership, administration, interpersonal communication, and evangelical attitude. It also gives opportunity to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the priest. These results are tallied



and presented to the priest along with a written report of the dialogue. If significant problems surface, the Director consults with the Vicar for Ordained and Lay Ecclesial Ministry to develop a strategy which addresses the issues and to determine if this situation can continue.

In a less formal approach the priest and parish leadership sit down together to discuss the transition. The First Year Transition Review form, which includes prayers and a Bible reading, outlines the transition discussion (see Appendix C for a copy of the form). A facilitator also keeps a record of the responses. This process enables issues to be uncovered in the context of prayer. If larger problems surface during this process, the Board would most likely move forward with a more formal approach.

### Evaluation

Within the assignment process of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, some practices are very beneficial; however, some may be potentially problematic. The terms for each priest at his parish help keep priests moving around instead of staying in one location for decades. In the latter situation, problems may develop when that minister leaves; the congregation may struggle with identity. After decades of being led by one man with his own style and intricacies, transitioning to a new shepherd who leads differently may be difficult. Terms may help to avoid some of those potential problems. However, in some situations there may be value in long-term ministry in one place. Congregations with frequent turn-over in pastors would benefit from the stability a long pastorate brings.

The system of assigning priests may cause issues. With this procedure the congregation has little to no choice in their minister. In some cases the decision made by the Archbishop may not adequately reflect what the parish leaders need or have indicated. The opposite practice of a

congregation choosing and calling a minister may be preferred for several additional reasons. If a congregation is not given a direct choice in the selection of their next priest, they may be tempted to disregard the new-comer's message if he doesn't fit what the congregational leaders had in mind. Furthermore, giving the choice of their next spiritual leader to the congregation allows them to take ownership of this decision. It may also help develop a closer relationship between the congregation and their pastor since they personally chose him to lead them.

### **The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – Milwaukee Synod**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America uses a system of filling vacant parishes different from all the practices detailed above. I became familiar with their practices by interviewing Rev. Paul D. Erickson, the Bishop of the Greater Milwaukee Synod of the ELCA on November 13, 2017. All the information below comes from that interview.

#### **Filling Vacant Parishes**

When an ELCA parish is in a time of pastoral transition the congregation follows a well-documented call process to find a new spiritual leader. This process is extensively laid out in the Call Process Manual, which can be found on the Greater Milwaukee Synod website.<sup>21</sup> Until that new leader is found, the congregation is served by an interim pastor for about 12-18 months who preaches, teaches, and gives pastoral care. He or she also guides them through the Mission Exploration Process. This process accomplishes several things as explained in the Call Process Manual.

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21. <https://milwaukee-synod.org/download/administration/Call-Process-Manual.pdf>, accessed February 5, 2018.

The Mission Exploration Process prior to the calling of the new Pastor or an Associate in Ministry is important in several ways. First, it provides the opportunity to review and assess the mission and ministry of the Congregation. Second, it provides the Call Committee with basic information and a description of leadership needs which will guide their work. Third, the profile will assist the Bishop in recommending candidates to be considered by the Call Committee. Fourth, it provides a picture of the Congregation for the candidates as they consider serving the Congregation.<sup>22</sup>

The importance of this process is easily recognizable when one considers all that is accomplished through it. The congregation takes a series of steps to complete the process – having conversations and listening sessions, looking at the congregational history, and articulating God’s call for them in the future. All of this seeks to identify the culture of the congregation.

Another document which helps the congregation assess themselves correctly is the Ministry Site Profile.<sup>23</sup> Along with basic contact information, this document outlines their demographics, finances, ministry characteristics, mission, and “ideal” next pastor. After the congregation has completed their profile, the bishop and a member of his or her staff meet with the entire congregation to review the document and ensure it is reflective of the entire congregation. Typically, the document is further refined in this meeting.

Once the Ministry Site Profile is completed, the congregation elects a call committee. This committee will represent the congregation until the final step in the process. Until that point everything is handled by the committee. One task of the call committee is to ground themselves in the Word, so that the process remains spiritual instead of bureaucratic. The committee members must also get to know each other and develop a sense of trust among themselves. When

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22. Call Process Manual, p. 28.

23. A sample of this form can be found at [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Sample\\_Ministry%20Site%20Profile.pdf?\\_ga=2.216551254.138176750.1518163283-1937767445.1510595636](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Sample_Ministry%20Site%20Profile.pdf?_ga=2.216551254.138176750.1518163283-1937767445.1510595636).

deliberating over names later in the process, this relationship of trust will allow for openness and honest communication, a necessary part of those discussions.

The next step of the process is completed by the synod office. Staff members use the finalized Ministry Site Profile to search for possible pastors to fill the vacancy and compile those individuals into a list for the congregation. The names for that list come from a variety of places – pastors currently serving in the Greater Milwaukee Synod who are looking to move to a different congregation, pastors from other synods or regions who are looking to move to a congregation in the Greater Milwaukee Synod, and individuals suggested by the congregation’s call committee. The staff member assigned to this congregation’s transition works through the names available to find individuals who would match this congregation. The staff member uses the Rostered Minister Profile to evaluate each name.<sup>24</sup> Along with basic contact information, this fifteen-page form gives details about the pastor’s education, work and ministry history, areas of expertise, lay and church references, reflections on personal ministry, ministry preferences, and any other information he or she would like to share. With a completed Rostered Minister Profile the staff member has a clear picture of each available pastor. The staff member also has the Ministry Site Profile which asks similar questions and creates a clear picture of the congregation. Using these two documents, the staff member can play matchmaker to find individuals who would be a good fit for this congregation.

If the staff member thinks he or she has found an individual that might be a good candidate for the congregation, an interview is set up between that pastor and the synod office. The candidate is also given the Ministry Site Profile of the congregation to see if he or she thinks

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24. A sample of this form can be found at [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Sample\\_Rostered\\_Minister\\_Profile.pdf?\\_ga=2.216551254.138176750.1518163283-1937767445.1510595636](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Sample_Rostered_Minister_Profile.pdf?_ga=2.216551254.138176750.1518163283-1937767445.1510595636).

it would be a good match. If the candidate agrees and the synod office thinks it would be a good match, that individual would go onto the list of candidates.

Once the list has about three or four names, it is presented to the call committee of the congregation. The bishop and staff member urge the committee to keep the names on that list confidential, so their ministries may not be disturbed during the process. The call committee is then asked to contact each of the individuals on that list within a week to set up interviews. They also can use the questions they prepared previously with the bishop and synod assistant for these interviews. From this point on, things are in the call committee's hands. They can move forward as they see fit. Often this involves calling the references from the Rostered Minister Profile. Some committees will have multiple rounds of interviews with one or more of the candidates. Some will go hear the candidates preach off-site or request a sermon video. The committee must also discuss and deliberate together, which is done most effectively if they have a relationship of trust developed during earlier study in God's Word.

Once the committee has chosen a final candidate, they call that individual to ask, "Will you be our final candidate? Will you agree to have your name recommended to the church council?" This is necessary because the pastor may be involved in more interview processes. If the pastor declines, the committee must come back to the synod office for more names and the process repeats itself. If the candidate agrees to be the final candidate, he or she must pull out of any other processes, and their name is brought to the church council. The call committee presents the individual and explains why they feel this person is the right pastor for their congregation. They will show how their profile matches with the profile of the congregation. The council then votes to pass the name along to the congregation.

Two weeks later a special congregational meeting is called. Usually, at this meeting there is an opportunity for the congregation to meet and greet the candidate in person. Some congregations will ask for a trial sermon, but that practice is becoming less and less common. After all questions have been asked and answered and discussion has ended, a vote is taken by written ballot whether or not to call the pastor. A two-thirds majority of those present and voting is necessary for a call to be issued; however, Bishop Erickson stressed if the vote to call is anything less than 90%, extra consideration may be necessary. If this is the case, often there is internal conflict within the congregation. Usually, the previous steps in the process will flush out any issues so such considerations are not necessary. If the vote is less than two-thirds, the congregation's call committee must go back to the synod for more names and the process begins again. If the vote is made to issue the candidate a call, the congregation has a new pastor.

#### Education and Placement of New ELCA Pastors

The process to become a pastor in the ELCA is called the Candidacy Process. In this process which is overseen by a staff member from the synod office, a committee of lay members and clergy meet with the candidates in a series of steps. The first step, Entrance, takes place before or during the first year of seminary. Several prerequisites must be completed before this step can be taken. The candidate must undergo a psychological profile which is partially funded by the synod, submit biographical information, and complete a theological reflection. The reflection asks questions such as, "How did you get to this point? How have you experienced the call?" and gives the opportunity for the candidate to express him or herself theologically. A two-member panel sits down with the individual and conducts an interview to discuss all their information.

The panel then makes a recommendation to the committee on whether or not to approve the candidate. Most often candidates are approved to continue in the process.

The ELCA runs seven seminaries across the United States, but it is not required that candidates attend one of these seminaries. If an individual attends a non-ELCA seminary, their candidacy committee needs to review what they studied. In most cases, some time in an ELCA seminary is required, up to a year.

The second step of the candidacy process is called Endorsement. During this step the candidate must complete clinical pastoral education which traditionally takes place before internship to ensure he or she is ready to go out and do full-time field work. The seminary which the candidate is attending provides feedback on this step to the synod.

Approval is the final step of the candidacy process and takes place in the fall of the fourth year of seminary. This step is a bit more detailed than the first two steps and involves input from his or her internship supervisor, input from the seminary faculty, and an approval essay. Questions for the essay, which are standardized across the ELCA, vary from year to year. They ask for the student to articulate their views on theology, spirituality, and ministry practice – head, heart, and hands. The essay and other material are reviewed before a final interview takes place, and the candidacy committee makes the decision to approve him or her for ordination in the church or not. If the process has been faithfully followed, there are no surprises at this point. Any issues would have been discovered earlier. In some circumstances, approval comes with conditions. For example, the candidacy committee can request more work or study be completed in a certain area. This way the committee has some freedom and flexibility to meet the unique needs of every situation.

After a candidate is approved for ordination, he or she enters a biannual, national assignment process. The ELCA is comprised of sixty-five synods divided into nine regions. In an effort to make candidates available to the whole church body, all candidates from across the country are grouped together. Each region then indicates how many first-call openings are available in that area. All the synods in each region total their openings to get this number. After the overall number of openings in all the regions is totaled, it is compared with the number of candidates. The percentage of openings that can be filled with those candidates is calculated and carried over to the number of candidates each region receives. For example, if Region 5 has 50 first-call openings but there are only enough candidates to fill 20% of all openings nationwide, Region 5 would receive 20% of what it needed or 10 candidates. Those candidates are then assigned to different synods in the region.

Candidates are placed into openings through an assignment process conducted by a committee of one bishop from each region. To help them in this process, each candidate fills out extensive paperwork detailing his or her gifts and skills. The form used for this is the Roster Minister Profile.<sup>25</sup> This fifteen-page form records personal information, past work and ministry experiences, references, ministry reflections, geographical and ministry type preferences, and much more. Then the committee of bishops works through the list of candidates and does their best to match each one with a presented first-call opening based on their profile. Eventually, all the candidates will be assigned to a region. Then, that region is responsible for distributing the candidates among each synod.

Bishop Erickson stressed that this is a prayerful process. Often during the assignment process the bishops will stop to pray, keeping in mind they are doing the work of God's church,

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25. This form is also used with current ministers as described above.



and trusting God is working through this process. The candidates are also encouraged “to be open to the Holy Spirit, to trust that God’s going to use you, and that the Holy Spirit will work through this process.”

### Conflicts between Pastor and Parish

The ELCA is not immune to the challenge of conflicts that arise between pastor and parish. Sometimes the synod will hear from parishioners with complaints against their pastor. Often the Synod will instruct them to meet with their pastor or church leadership to address their complaint. Unless the individual contacting the synod office is an elected church official, this is always the course of action. However, there are times when the synod will need to come in and listen to those situations on an individual basis. Sometimes this involves meeting with the church council or pastor in person. Because every situation is different, the steps taken will vary every time.

The first level is simply to listen to the issues and guide them to resolve the situation themselves. This can be done by the bishop or others on the synod staff. Self-resolution is preferred because the congregation learns how to talk about issues and builds the skills to resolve their own conflicts.

Self-resolution is not always possible. Some conflicts are too long-standing or severe to be resolved internally. If this is the case, the synod is able to provide several resources. One option is the consultation committee, a group of twelve people elected by the synod assembly. When the bishop is aware of a conflict needing his attention, he or she can select three individuals from this committee, two pastors and one layperson, to form a panel for this conflict. The church council or pastor involved in a conflict can also request a panel. Additionally, if 30%

of the membership of a congregation signs a petition, a panel must be formed. If a panel is formed at the bishop's discretion, it is beneficial to get the council's and pastor's approval. This strengthens the panel's recommendations given later in the process.

Once the panel is formed, the bishop gives it all the information he or she has received so far – the nature of the conflict, emails and phone calls received, etc. The panel then visits the congregation to meet with the pastor and council leadership to determine what the resolution process will entail. They will often set up listening sessions, congregational forums, or one-on-one times slots for congregational members to talk with them. The exact procedures are up to their discretion based on the situation. This will last four to six weeks. After they have gathered all the needed information, they write a list of observations and recommendations. Some examples of recommendations are the pastor moves to a different congregation, the council president resigns, or other staff members be dismissed. Once the recommendations have been written the bishop sees them first, followed by the pastor. Finally, the recommendations are read at a congregational forum. However, these are only recommendations. The congregation is autonomous and chooses whether or not to follow the recommendations. Here is the benefit from having the council and pastor agree to a panel early in the process. If they are on board prior the panel doing its work, they are more likely to follow their recommendations. If both sides agree, the recommendations are followed and the process comes to a close.

Another available resource for conflict in congregations is the Zeidler Center for Public Discussion based out of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, WI. This non-profit organization facilitates structured conversations to gain understanding and trust. Their mission as stated on their website reads, "The mission of the Frank Zeidler Center for Public Discussion is

to foster civil dialogue and invite trust in the midst of differences.”<sup>26</sup> This resource is most valuable when there are two sides which are not listening to each other. The Zeidler Center facilitator will bring individuals from both sides into a conversation circle of seven or eight people. Clear and structured guidelines govern the discussion such as, “You may only speak for yourself,” “You may only speak for two minutes,” and “You may say what you think and feel.” The facilitator ensures everyone follows the guidelines and takes notes on the discussion. After several rounds of conversations are completed, the Zeidler Center generates a report which details major themes and individual contributions that arise during the dialogue. These reports are presented in an anonymous and non-attributable way and provide a wealth of quantitative and qualitative data which can be used in strategic planning moving forward.

Different situations call for different courses of action. It is up to the bishop and the synod office to decide how to handle the conflicts that arise. Sometimes what is necessary is simply a little coaching and shepherding. However, if the issues are larger and demand more intervention, the processes described above are very useful tools in resolving these conflicts.

### Evaluation

The ELCA process of assigning candidates and interviewing prospective pastors also contains beneficial and potentially problematic practices. The process as a whole is very thorough and well documented. The Greater Milwaukee Synod has done a fantastic job of recording their practices and giving instruction to congregations during times of pastoral transition. The Rostered Minister Profile and Ministry Site Profile are also beneficial. These extensive and detailed documents help the congregation to evaluate its ministry, create goals, and establish a

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26. <https://www.zeidlercenter.org/mission-vision>, accessed December 3, 2017.

vision for the future. Thinking through these types of questions, even if not during a time of pastoral transition, will help congregations as they look forward.

It is conceivable that some parts of the calling system of the ELCA may lead to problems. For example, the interview process done by congregations may considerably disrupt the current ministry of the interviewee. He or she is still a pastor at a congregation needing care and attention. Setting his or her sights on a different church may cause tension and resentment in parishioners at his or her current congregation. This becomes a larger issue if the pastor does not end up moving to that new congregation. His or her future ministry may be tainted. While some level of disturbance is inevitable when a pastor considers a change in ministry, the degree of disruption these practices bring may be unnecessary and harmful.

Another potential problem is the practice of hearing or requesting a test sermon. This procedure may lead both the pastor and the congregation into sin. The pastor interviewing for this position may be tempted to preach what people want to hear instead of what God's Word is proclaiming. Similarly, the congregation may be tempted to focus on superficial gifts of the preacher, such as his or her charisma, and downplay the content of his or her message. Additionally, from a practical perspective, one sermon will not give an adequate portrayal of the preaching ability of the pastor. For these reasons it may be better to avoid this practice.

### **Christian Missionary Alliance**

Churches which are members of the Christian Missionary Alliance use a different process to find a new pastor. In order to learn more about their practices, I interviewed Senior Pastor Brian Dainsberg who serves at Alliance Bible Church in Mequon, Wisconsin, on November 28, 2017.

Alliance Bible Church is a member of the Western Great Lakes District of the Christian Missionary Alliance.

### Finding a New Pastor

When an Alliance church is without a pastor, the process that is followed varies on what position is vacant. If the congregation is looking to change or add an associate pastor, the congregation has more flexibility in the process. However, if the role of lead pastor is vacant, the district is typically more involved. In the later situation, the first step is the discovery phase. The elders of the congregation must know what they are looking for in their new pastor. They must evaluate what spiritual gifts, natural abilities, and spiritual capacities are needed as well as what gifts and abilities are not as important. The district superintendent can be more or less involved in this process depending on the desire of the elders. It is the elders' responsibility to know and listen to what the congregation is seeking. This is often done through listening sessions with congregational members. They must also identify what type of congregation they are, their demographics, their size culture<sup>27</sup>, the culture of their area, etc. All of this will play a role in their search for a new lead pastor.

The district superintendent can also help the congregation with this step if need be. How exactly he provides assistance varies from district to district. For example, the Western Great Lakes District superintendent uses a form to help the elders and the congregation learn about themselves and their ideal future pastor. Other district superintendents do not use this form but whatever methods they see fit to accomplish this step.

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27. For an in-depth look at size culture and the significance it has on a congregation, read *Leadership and Church Size Dynamics* by Timothy Keller.

Once the district superintendent has a clear picture of the congregation and type of pastor the congregation is looking for, he will begin the search phase of the process. This search is not confined to his district or Alliance schools but is nationwide. He will post on job boards or church staffing sites. He may post on various seminary or college job boards. The superintendents from the various districts are closely networked with each other, so they can easily contact each other to ask about possible candidates for this congregation. Using all these different avenues, the district superintendent compiles a pool of possible candidates. All candidates must meet the requirements of an Alliance pastor as explained below. He thoroughly vets them using a battery of tests – StrengthsFinder, DISC personality testing, other various spiritual gift assessments, and references. His work involves a lot of matchmaking between the profile the elders and congregation created and possible candidates. If the district superintendent finds an individual he thinks will be a good fit, he may call that person directly or he may pass the name on to the board of elders.

The next step is up to the board of elders. They can carry out the interview process as they see fit. Often this will involve bringing in the candidate to spend time with the elder board, to see the church and its ministry, and to meet the existing staff. If the elders decide this is the right person to fill their position, they will hire him.

Some Alliance churches are of such a size and have enough resources that they do not need assistance from the district superintendent. They will handle the entire process on their own and go to the district superintendent at the end for his approval of the new pastor. These churches will often use search firms to find candidates for them. These firms, some of which specialize in church searches, do the majority of the work for the congregation. An employee of the firm will come and spend time with the congregation, its leadership, and its current staff. He or she will

visit the church during the weekend to see the church's services. After learning about the congregation's size, demographics, culture, etc., he or she will build a profile to match what the congregation is looking for in their new pastor, just like a district superintendent would. From there, the employee will take that profile and cross reference it with all the profiles on the firm's database and all the other firms to which it is connected. The employee will do all the initial screening and interviews on behalf of the congregation. When he or she finds some candidates matching the congregation's profile, those names are passed on to the elder board who can interview or disregard them as they wish until they find the individual they want to hire.

#### Becoming an Alliance Pastor

The process to become a pastor in the Christian Missionary Alliance can take a couple different shapes. The individual must have a minimum of thirty credits of Bible and theology from an accredited institution. The Alliance has four colleges in the United States and one seminary; however, individuals do not have to attend those schools in order to become an Alliance pastor. For example, Pastor Dainsberg attended the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay for his undergraduate work and attended Trinity Evangelical Divinity School for his graduate studies. There is flexibility in how this requirement is met.

Once the individual has accumulated the necessary thirty credits, he must work with the district superintendent and Licensing Ordination Consecration Council (LOCC) which is made up of pastors who have served a minimum of fifteen full-time years in the ministry. The first step is a licensing process which is for those who have achieved their thirty credits and are going to work toward ordination. This process entails testing in those areas of ministry and practice in Bible and theology along with an hour-long interview with the LOCC. Once a provisional

license has been issued, the individual has two years to complete his ordination. The requirements for this next step is to read ten books, write seven or eight papers, and attend two or three seminars. Once that is completed, he goes back before the LOCC for an ordination interview which can take up to three hours. Once that is completed and the individual is approved by the council, he is an officially ordained minister in the Christian Missionary Alliance.

### Evaluation

The practices of the Christian Missionary Alliance have some positive aspects but also some potential problems. As in the ELCA, a positive aspect is the emphasis on congregational analysis. Having the congregation work through creating a profile helps them learn more about themselves – their mission, goals, vision, etc. Without the calling process demanding this, it may not be done.

There is potential danger in Alliance practices. This intense focus of creating an ideal minister profile when working to fill a vacancy in a congregation may result in dissatisfaction when a new pastor doesn't fit that model. This may lead to a popular business mindset in the elders or parishioners. This business mindset emphasizes the need to move employees if they do not fit the job or culture of the company. The same idea is applied to hiring new employees. If the applicant does not fit the job description, move on to others. While this mindset may bring success in the business world, it does not belong in churches. Christian Missionary Alliance practices more easily lend themselves to this mindset creeping into congregational leaders. If unchecked, it may lead into practice where elders of a congregation hire and fire pastors as they see fit. This disregards scriptural principles regarding the doctrine of the call. Through the divine



call, the pastor has been placed in that congregation by God who is surely accomplishing his purposes through that pastor's ministry regardless of how well the elders think he fits their profile.

## CONCLUSION

When Jesus ascended into heaven, he commanded his disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19, 20). This is the mission and calling of the entire church. We are to carry out this work until Jesus comes again in glory. However, some men were called in a unique manner. The apostles were directly chosen by Jesus to preach the good news, just as God directly chose prophets in the Old Testament to proclaim his Word.

God still calls Christians to share his Word and, additionally, he calls some among them to do so publicly – among and on behalf of believers. The authority to extend calls in God's name is given to the church; however, this call is no less divine. Ephesians 4:11-12 tell us, “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” Similarly, 1 Corinthians 12:28 says, “And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.” The call from the church into the public ministry is divine.

However, what is not divine is the protocol which carries out that call. God did not prescribe how the church deliberates and decides on calls. Those decisions are left up to us in

Christian freedom. In time, various protocols have developed and are practiced by different church bodies within the Christian church. This thesis sought to examine those different practices and identify positive practices and potential pitfalls. After examining the WELS, LC—MS, Archdiocese of Milwaukee, ELCA, and Christian Missionary Alliance, the research revealed three items worth considering.

First of all, although the five church bodies differed in their calling protocol, there are many commonalities between the groups. In every group there is a high regard for training. Each church body invests time and resources into instructing future pastors and providing the necessary experience and support. Another commonality is the prayerful approach taken when issuing a call or assignment. Finally, all the groups make use of resources or personnel inside and outside the congregation to improve their protocol. All of these are cause for general appreciation and thanks.

The second item worth considering is the concerns some protocol brings. Certain lessons are good to keep in mind through the calling process. For example, problems may arise if church body leadership overlords the laity, or conversely, if the laity act independent of church body leadership. Congregations may end up in competition or become divided internally. In addition, there may be danger in pastors having too little or too much involvement in the process. Such actions may lead to selfishness or disruptions in ministry.

Finally, it is worthwhile to consider utilizing sensible safeguards to mitigate concerns in calling protocol. Such safeguards include keeping the call in the hands of the congregation, and giving the final decision to the laity. Also, there is benefit in giving the pastor a voice in the matter and allowing him to choose the ministry where he believes his gifts will best serve God's kingdom at that time. Another safeguard is to respect the current ministry of a pastor. One

example of this in practice would be to refrain from in-depth, onsite interviews or preaching. Such protocol makes it difficult for a pastor to faithfully minister to his current congregation. A final safeguard would be to continue to require qualified ministers as God prescribes in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, especially in doctrine and practice.

Although the call into the public ministry is divine, it is given through the human hands of the church. The procedures for giving that call can vary as demonstrated in this thesis. Some protocol better guards against concerns and problems that may arise in the calling process. It is our responsibility as Christians to seek after the most scriptural, effective, and beneficial practices. When we believe we have found them, we must hold to those practices regardless of pressures from other church bodies or the secular world. However, time rolls on, circumstances change, and views shift. Therefore, ongoing evaluation and flexibility in methodology is necessary, all while remaining true to Scripture. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, J. P. Koehler put forward this same idea when he suggested principles for the restudy of the doctrine of the ministry.<sup>28</sup> He warned against maintaining old methodology without returning to Scripture.

The inertia of which I am speaking shows itself in a lack of readiness again and again to treat theological-scholarly matters or practical matters theologically and fundamentally without preconceived notions. This is necessary if we are to watch and criticize ourselves. For in the course of time, circumstances change and our views also change. For example, words and expressions change their meaning. And if we do not again and again rethink in detail the most important theological matters and our way of presenting them, it can happen that all of this can become mere empty form without spirit or life. As we practice such self-criticism, we shall find that the divine truths which we draw out of Scripture indeed always remain the same, but the manner in which we defend them, yes, even how we present them is not always totally correct. Here we can and must continue to learn.<sup>29</sup>

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28. Brug, *Ministry of the Word*, x.

29. "The Importance of the Historical Disciplines," *The Wauwatosa Theology*, Vol. 3 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House), 434-435.

May we continually dive into Scripture to confirm the divinity of the call, and may we faithfully practice and clearly present that divine call in our human protocol!

## APPENDIX A – PASTORAL MINISTRY ASSESSMENT

The following Pastoral Ministry Assessment form is used by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee with a priest after his first year in ministry to be completed with his supervising pastor.

**PASTORAL MINISTRY ASSESSMENT**  
For use by a Pastor and his Associate Pastor

*Associate's Version (Self-Assessment)*

Name of Associate: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of the start of the Assignment: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Assessment: From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_

*Instructions: The associate pastor fills out this self-assessment form and the pastor fills out his own assessment (Pastor's Version). Both the pastor and the associate share their completed form with the other and arrange a time to sit and discuss them in a relaxed setting.*

PART I: Describe an experience during this period when you were particularly energized in your ministry:

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PART II: Describe a ministry experience during this period that you felt was particularly draining:

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PART III

COMPETENCE RATINGS: (circle one where appropriate)

- 4 This is a consistent strength
- 3 Shows strength periodically but not consistently
- 2 Mostly adequate but much room for growth
- 1 Is not meeting my expectations in this area
- NA Not applicable yet

SKILLS	RATING	COMMENTS
<b><u>Leadership and Pastoral Effectiveness:</u></b>		
Contributes to a sense of community	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Empowers rather than dominates	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Engages in respectful dialogue with others	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Articulates a sense of parish vision	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Growing in ability to resolve conflict	4 3 2 1 NA	_____

Demonstrates how to say "no" in a diplomatic fashion	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Consults others when needed	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Delegates appropriately	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Plans, organizes and sets goals	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Manages effectively under pressure	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Affirms the good effort of others	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Shows initiative and new ideas	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Works well with lay staff and volunteers	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Speaks articulately (formal and informally)	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Writes clearly and coherently	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Collaborates well with other priests in the cluster and district	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Works well with his pastor	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
<b><u>Administrative Competence:</u></b>		
Holds/participates in meetings	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Complies with diocesan policies	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Administers budget with good stewardship	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Completes reports clearly and on time	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Informs others of his daily schedule	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Uses appropriate technologies for communications	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
<b><u>Leading Prayer and Worship:</u></b>		
Exhibits a love for the sacramental life of the Church, especially Holy Eucharist	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Exhibits an ability to preach and proclaim the Word	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Leads prayer both formally and spontaneously	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Makes sound liturgical and pastoral judgments concerning sacramental planning	4 3 2 1 NA	_____

**Personal & Spiritual Maturity:**

Engages in community prayer and spiritual growth	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Takes appropriate time for self	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Takes his schedules day off	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Participates in continuing formation	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Consults with a spiritual advisor	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Works well with people of differing cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Accepts the consequences of his decisions	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Participates in annual retreat	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Maintains physical health and wellness	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Shows a servant-leader approach to ministry	4 3 2 1 NA	_____

**Commitment to the Church and Justice:**

Respects the role of the Magisterium and stays in communion with it	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Fosters unity and an ecumenical spirit in the community	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Demonstrates a commitment to the poor and marginalized in the society	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Demonstrates a commitment to forgiveness	4 3 2 1 NA	_____
Shows a sensitivity to human differences, Especially of race, ethnicity, culture, gender	4 3 2 1 NA	_____

PART IV: In planning for the future, please assess (with a check mark) below the areas of parish life in which you have fully engaged and been exposed to, and those areas still needing your active involvement and understanding, before you feel you could be considered for a Pastor or Administrator appointment.

**ACTIVITY****Fully Engaged****Needs Additional Experience**

Collaboration with Other Parishes

Youth Formation (school or religious ed)



Finance and Budgeting

Funeral Ministry

Homiletics

Liturgical Preparation

Parish Councils and Committees

Pastoral Counseling

RCIA

Sacramental Recordkeeping

Stewardship

Supervision and Support of Staff

Visitation of Sick/Homebound

Wedding Ministry

Requests from High Schools  
for assistance

Spring Assembly of Priests participation

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**PART V (Complete as Appropriate):** This section seeks to discuss the living arrangements between the Pastor and the Associate if they are living together in a rectory. Please give your opinion of whether the current living arrangement is working out for you and the Pastor (or other priests living in the rectory), or if there are any refinements that need to be discussed.

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**Overall assessment of your ministry at this time:**

Summary of Strengths:

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Summary of Areas Needing Refinement or Added Attention/Training:

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Specific Goals to Strengthen Your Ability to Serve:

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Pastor)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Associate Pastor)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Copies of this review (and the Associate's Self-Assessment) to be kept by the Pastor and copies shared with the Diocesan Director of Priest and Lay Ecclesial Personnel and Placement.  
Form Date: 6-10-10*

## APPENDIX B – PASTORAL TRANSITIONS – PASTORAL APPRAISAL FORM

The following Pastoral Transitions – Pastoral Appraisal Form used by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee enables parish leaders to rate the priest and to comment on his specific strengths and weaknesses.

## PASTORAL TRANSITIONS - pastoral appraisal form

*This questionnaire is to be filled out by each ministerial staff member and each parish council member present at the Transition Review meeting. Your responses will remain anonymous. The Vicar or Associate Vicar for Clergy will present the tallied results to the priest/parish director.*

Please **circle** the number in the right column that best describes how you feel about priest/parish director. # 1 means *very poor*. #2 means *poor*. # 3 is *ordinary*. #4 is *good*. # 5 means *very good*. Please **skip** any item that does not apply or about which you have no information.

<i>Very poor</i>	<i>poor</i>	<i>ordinary</i>	<i>good</i>	<i>very good</i>
1	2	3	4	5

- |  |           |          |           |          |         |
|--|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|---------|
| 1. Rate the quality of the priest's presiding at Mass, the sacraments and/or worship.  | 1         | 2        | 3         | 4        | 5       |
| 2. Rate the overall impact of the priest/parish director's preaching.  | 1         | 2        | 3         | 4        | 5       |
| 3. Rate the priest/parish director's relationship to the parishioners.   | 1         | 2        | 3         | 4        | 5       |
| 4. Rate the priest/parish director's communications skills.  | 1         | 2        | 3         | 4        | 5       |
| 5. How well does the priest or parish director motivate the ministerial staff?   | 1         | 2        | 3         | 4        | 5       |
| 6. How well does the pastor/parish director administer the parish and its staff?   | 1         | 2        | 3         | 4        | 5       |
| 7. He/she is a person of <b>integrity</b>  | 1         | 2        | 3         | 4        | 5       |
| 8. He/she is a <b>competent</b> minister   | 1         | 2        | 3         | 4        | 5       |
| 9. He/she <b>respects the freedom and dignity</b> of others.   | 1         | 2        | 3         | 4        | 5       |
| 10. He/she is <b>committed to the spirit</b> of the gospel.  | 1         | 2        | 3         | 4        | 5       |
| 11. Circle the <b>two</b> of these styles which <b>BEST</b> describes the priest/parish director's leadership style with the council or staff? |           |          |           |          |         |
| Empowers   | delegates | promotes | persuades | controls | passive |
| 12. Circle the <b>two</b> of these styles <b>LEAST</b> describes the priest/parish director's leadership style with the council or staff?      |           |          |           |          |         |
| Empowers   | delegates | promotes | persuades | controls | passive |

13. Please tell us about the strengths of this priest/ parish director?

14. What are the areas that need to be addressed by this priest/parish director?

15. What other comments would you like to make about priest/parish director's leadership?

**Please tell us your role in the parish:**

I am a \_\_\_\_\_ council member.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am a member of the ministerial staff.

## APPENDIX C – FIRST YEAR TRANSITION REVIEW

The following First Year Transition Review form enables the priest and parish leadership to discuss the first year in a pastoral transition within a devotional context.

*This review is conducted with parish leadership and the new pastor/parish director  
Please reserve at least 45-60 minutes of your meeting for this process.*

## Opening Prayer

All - Creator God, you have called us to be your people and to further your reign on earth. We come together to do your will. Strengthen us in our ministry. Enable us to continue to understand, accept and nourish each other as we serve this parish. We ask this through Jesus the Lord. Amen.

## Reading

**Colossians 3:10-17** Contemporary English Version (CEV)

<sup>10</sup>Each of you is now a new person. You are becoming more and more like your Creator, and you will understand him better. <sup>11</sup>It doesn't matter if you are a Greek or a Jew, or if you are circumcised or not. You may even be a barbarian or a Scythian, <sup>[a]</sup> and you may be a slave or a free person. Yet Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

<sup>12</sup>God loves you and has chosen you as his own special people. So be gentle, kind, humble, meek, and patient. <sup>13</sup>Put up with each other, and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you. <sup>14</sup>Love is more important than anything else. It is what ties everything completely together.

<sup>15</sup>Each one of you is part of the body of Christ, and you were chosen to live together in peace. So let the peace that comes from Christ control your thoughts. And be grateful.

<sup>16</sup>Let the message about Christ completely fill your lives, while you use all your wisdom to teach and instruct each other. With thankful hearts, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. <sup>17</sup>Whatever you say or do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks to God the Father because of him.

## Discussion of Our Transition

*Participants share, taking one question at a time. Facilitator keeps a record of the responses.*

- What has gone well in the parish in the past 9 to 12 months? *Note similarities and differences.*
- What strengths have you observed in each other during this time? *Note similarities and differences.*
- What concerns do you have? Any surprises or possible misunderstandings? Any new practices which may be puzzling or problematic? *List issues and clarify.*
- What issues need to be addressed in the future? *List issues and clarify.* What expectations do you still wish to pursue? *List issues and clarify.*

## Closing Prayer

*Close this session with prayers by asking each participant to share a prayer of thanks.*

Example: In gratitude for \_\_\_\_\_, we pray:

All: **We thank you, God.** *[Other prayers...]*

Lord's Prayer: Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name;  
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. Amen

## Sign of Peace

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