



WHAT TO DO WHEN A PASTOR RECEIVES A CALL

- 1) Acknowledge immediately your receipt of the call by sending a letter of acknowledgement to the calling congregation. Send copies of the letter to the following:
 - a) Your district president
 - b) The president of the district in which the calling congregation is located
 - c) Your district mission executive if your congregation is receiving district mission subsidy.
 - d) Your circuit visitor
 - e) The circuit visitor of the circuit in which the calling congregation is located.
 - f) The vacancy pastor serving the calling congregation.
- 2) Notify the members of your congregation that you have received the call (calling a pastor is a public act). As much as possible, all the members should receive the same information at the same time. In addition, read or publish the letter which has been sent by the calling congregation to your congregation.
- 3) Set a meeting date (congregational meeting, voters meeting—listen to the counsel of your elders on this) to discuss the call with the members of your congregation.
- 4) Deliberate on the call. In this regard, pray fervently, asking God to help you determine:
 - a) Am I still needed where I am?
 - b) Would it be beneficial for my present congregation if I stay? Why?
 - c) Would it be beneficial for my present congregation if I leave? Why?
 - d) Is the Lord challenging me to use the gifts He has given in a different part of the kingdom at this time?
 - e) Is the Lord challenging me to grow in the gifts He gives by responding to ministry challenges in a new location?
 - f) Are there ministry opportunities you and your present congregation have not met? Is the Lord by this call leading you and your present congregation to be recommitted to each other and to meeting these opportunities together? Why or why not?
 - g) What family concerns enter into your consideration of this Call?
- 5) Notify the calling congregation in writing of your decision regarding the call. Send copies of this letter to the following:
 - a) Your district president
 - b) The president of the district in which the calling congregation is located.
 - c) Your district mission executive if your congregation is receiving district mission subsidy.
 - d) Your circuit visitor
 - e) The circuit visitor of the circuit in which the calling congregation is located.
 - f) The vacancy pastor serving the calling congregation.
 - g) Notify the members of your congregation of your decision regarding the call (same as #2).

Some Specific Do's and Don'ts (*helpful suggestions from those more experienced*)

- 1) DO pray fervently asking the Lord to show you His will regarding the call.
- 2) DO seek the advice of your circuit visitor and/or district president if you believe this would be helpful in reaching a decision regarding the call. They will be glad to help.
- 3) DO ask for the advice, comments and prayers of your members. Many pastors have found it helpful to prepare a discussion tool (an example is attached) by which they survey the present membership and which is then used in a special meeting of the congregation and/or church council/elders. The purpose of such a tool is to help facilitate substantive discussion to provide help and direction for the pastor considering a call.
- 4) DO NOT negotiate a compensation package with the calling congregation. If the salary is truly inadequate, decline the call. If you believe the situation calls for it, when you decline indicate that the salary is inadequate, and recommend that the congregation review the compensation package prior to extending their next call. But whatever you do, **DO NOT indicate that you are open to receiving the call again if the compensation package is adjusted.** This denigrates the integrity of the call process, especially in the eyes of the lay people.
- 5) DO NOT accept or reject the call on the basis of any contingencies (“...if I can sell my house,” “...if the congregation will give me the down payment to buy a house,” etc.). The call must be accepted or declined on the basis of its own merits.
- 6) Though it is always a factor to consider, DO NOT let home ownership (the selling or the purchasing of a home) determine your decision regarding a call.
- 7) DO NOT **request** an on-site visit at the expense of the congregation.
- 8) If the congregation invites you to visit, DO BE CAUTIOUS about accepting such an invitation. (The question to ask: “Will an on-site visit give you information for your consideration that you will not be able to obtain in any other manner?”)
- 9) DO reach a decision without delay (normally within two to four weeks of receiving the call documents). If you are unable to reach a clear decision regarding the call within four weeks (five weeks maximum, unless there are other extenuating circumstances), **decline it.**

This document is an excerpt from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Council of Presidents Policy Manual.