

Calls, Schmalls, What Does This Mean? (Information for a Call Committee)

A Call is much more than employment. In a Call, the Holy Spirit works through the congregation, the Call committee, and the worker to bring them together in the way that best serves the needs of the Church. A Call implies much more than doing a job and getting a paycheck. It is a placement for ministry. It is a commitment on the part of both the congregation and the worker that goes beyond any employment contract. We have heard the terms, Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace, and Good Shepherd used to describe our God. You can add to that list the title of Holy Head Hunter in describing the work of the Holy Spirit in the call process.

Persons eligible to receive a Call are pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of parish music, deaconesses, and directors of Christian outreach. They become eligible for a Call by receiving training at one of our Lutheran Synodical colleges, universities, or seminaries, either while obtaining a degree or by taking special classes (colloquy) and undergoing an examination process after graduating from a non-Synodical institution. Once a worker is eligible, a congregation issues a Call to that person. If the worker is a new graduate, the process is somewhat different, with the Synodical school actually placing the person in the congregation. However, even this process is initiated by the congregation.

As a Lutheran Church and School, you take your Calls and the filling of vacancies very seriously. That means the process may take longer than it would take a company to hire a new employee. Typically, in the Call process, the Call seeks the worker, rather than the worker the Call. A committee is formed to determine the needs of the congregation and the type of person best suited to fill those needs. A description of responsibilities and qualifications (i.e. a position description) is prepared. The board or committee then begins to gather names of candidates. Those names come from the district office (Education Exec), and perhaps other contacts. Once names are submitted, the district office supplies the Call Committee or Board with the biographical information (LEIF) for each candidate. These forms are far more extensive than resumes, containing references, reviews, and various questions answered by the candidate. The questions cover educational and ministry issues. While the Call committee (or search team) reviews names and LEIFs from the district, you also solicit names from within the congregation if you wish to do so. As you receive those names, please email them to me or to Kim Violette, my assistant, immediately so that we can request the LEIF of that person and get it back to you quickly. When you do receive candidate names to consider, make sure you get their contact information or where they are currently serving also.

After the Call committee or board reviews the biographical information on the candidates (LEIFs), it narrows the list down to those persons who appear best suited to the ministry position to be filled. The Call committee is encouraged to check all references listed for each candidate, including references which may not appear on the candidates list of references (such as their pastor or a teacher on staff.) This is an area that I can certainly

assist you in if desired. Phone interviews may be conducted at this time with the candidates. You may also wish to conduct personal interviews, especially if the candidate is local. After the interviews, depending on your constitution, the Call committee:

- 1) Makes a recommendation to Call a candidate (may need to be approved by the association assembly.) This person is usually invited to visit the school for more than a day to give the candidate, the staff, and the board the greatest opportunity to learn about each other. Or...
- 2) If the needs of the school and the qualities/gifts of the candidate seem to fit, the committee will recommend to the congregation that a Call be issued. In either case, the necessary paperwork is then prepared and sent to the candidate.

Although the Call does not have a time limit, usually the candidate will make a decision within two to three weeks. If the candidate accepts the Call, he or she will join you at a mutually agreed upon time. If the candidate declines the Call, the committee must start over, often picking up at the stage of the telephone interviews, but just as often going all the way to the beginning by soliciting a fresh set of names for consideration.

Please keep this important Call process in your daily prayers!

Rachel Klitzing
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