RETIRING WELL

A Helpful Guide for Pastors of The Texas District, LCMS



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GUIDELINES AND ETHICS FOR RETIRING PASTORS IN THE LCMS

Introduction:
As we currently face a record number of pastors arriving at the age and opportunity for retirement, a need for some basic guidelines seems necessary as many of the customs and habits understood and practiced by previous generations are often ignored. Understanding that realities like the economy, good health, longevity of life, etc., also play a role, these guidelines are offered to help maintain the "*unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace*." (Eph. 4:3)

Retirement is normally a well-earned time of transitioning into new forms of ministry that can be just as rewarding and fulfilling as earlier ones. While "forced" retirement does indeed happen from time to time, this is often the exception and should be dealt with through ecclesiastical supervision. However, no matter what, clear boundaries need to be understood, both from the pastor retiring and the congregation from which he is retiring.

Announcement and Transition
When a pastor determines that he will retire he should help prepare the congregation, spiritually, mentally, and physically, for the transition and inform them of what to expect once the transition has been made. Normally, the pastor should wait to formally announce his retirement until 6 months before, although he may indicate to the leadership sooner. If announced too early there is a danger of a "lame duck" mentality that could form, preventing meaningful ministry from occurring. To wait too long and announce a month or weeks prior leaves a congregation ill prepared to meet the challenges ahead.

The circuit visitor or district president or his representative should be invited to share with the church's leadership, and then with the entire congregation, what to expect with the retirement of their former pastor and what the appropriate parameters will be of any continuing relationship with the retiring pastor. At this point the district president or circuit visitor would also outline the future process for calling a new pastor, proper timing, interim ministry, etc. This should never come from the retiring pastor. It is best that he instruct his people to not do anything until they have spoken with the circuit visitor or district president.

When people have not been informed, or their concerns heard, they often put demands on the former pastor without knowing or understanding the ethical boundaries for the well-being of the total congregation. They also may make poor decisions regarding the future of the parish. Good knowledge can assist everyone in maintaining friendship ties while carefully severing pastoral ones and planning for the future. It also allows for mourning the loss while celebrating what has been meaningful in the past, and looking to the future.

Congregations must be taught the appropriate boundaries so as not to place a retired pastor in an awkward position. Any effort to involve a former pastor, retired pastor, or other Minister of Word and Sacrament in any issues between members and the current pastor will only confuse the situation and make matters worse. It will also put the former pastor, retired pastor, or other Minister of Word and Sacrament in an untenable ethical situation. While members of congregations are encouraged to avoid putting a pastor in such a position, it remains the responsibility of the pastor to maintain the appropriate boundaries.

Retirement does involve change, and that can be as exciting and freeing as the choices available. However, it does mean letting go of the former, to trust God into the future. His

Word in Jeremiah 29:11 also applies to the pastor: “For I know that plans I have for you” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans with hope and a future.” What is yet in store can be a rich time of ministry and personal adjustment to a lessened schedule. Each cycle of ministry brings its own rewards. Trusting God to lead you forward without holding onto the past is important.

Roster Status

A retired pastor is on the roster of the District in which last under call or in which the pastor resides. The retired pastor remains accountable to the district president where rostered. It is understood that a retired pastor must be a member in good standing of an LCMS congregation in order to remain on the roster of ordained ministers and remains subject to the same standards for ordained ministers of the church.

Guidelines

With more retiring pastors owning homes within the community of their last pastorate careful attention must be given to the church's well-being and that of the new pastor called to serve that church. With this concern in mind, the Council of Presidents of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod sets forth the following as ethical guidelines for retiring pastors.

1. It is recommended, upon retirement, that a pastor sever all pastoral ties with those previously served in the local parish. This includes weddings, funerals, pastoral calls and visits, and especially giving advice and counsel, and in any way continuing the previous pastoral relationships. This also involves attending church functions and services until an agreement can be made with the new pastor. The retired pastor should have little to no contact with the ministry, nor should he serve it in any capacity, either professionally or as a volunteer because of the sphere of influence he still has. Continuing ties of friendship is one thing, pastoral ties is another. He is no longer the pastor of this parish.

2. It is prudent for a retired pastor that he consider not remaining a member of the congregation served at the time of retirement. Transferring one’s membership to another congregation is very helpful to aid the successor pastor to assume pastoral leadership more readily. It also provides an opportunity for the retired pastor to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about the pastor’s retired role. One area of potential service for the retired pastor is interim (pastoral vacancy) ministry (or, with training, Intentional Interim Ministry). Many retired pastors provide valuable and needed ministry to congregations in time of transition following the resignation of a pastor. This is a way to honor our Lord and continue serving His Church.

3. If remaining within the community last served, the retiring pastor ought not attend the church previously served for a period of at least six months to one year following the retirement. Visits following that period will be at the invitation of the Interim Minister or the new pastor. Participation in baptisms, weddings and funerals should be by invitation of the Interim Minister or new pastor. Persons not associated with the church should be encouraged to form a relationship with the church and its Interim Minister or new pastor.

4. Once the new pastor is in place, the relationship between the new pastor and the former pastor with the church he formerly served can be worked out. If a satisfactory

and workable mutual agreement cannot be reached between them, they may wish to consult with the circuit visitor or district president.

5. It is imperative that members avoid discussing issues concerning the congregation, the current pastor, the staff, the Circuit, or any other aspect of congregational life with a former pastor or other ordained minister, or even members worshipping within the congregation. Such discussions are likely to be perceived as soliciting advice or counsel on church matters. It is in his best interest and for the health and welfare of the church, as well as the Kingdom, that a former pastor distance himself from the congregation and that other ministers not usurp the relationship between the current pastoral leadership and the congregation.

6. When a former pastor is named Pastor Emeritus, it needs to be understood by the former pastor and the congregation that this is an honorary title and does not imply or include any pastoral duties or responsibilities. The retiring pastor should always support and guard well the role of the new pastor.

7. It is disruptive for a pastor to succeed himself as Interim Minister of the church immediately served. Upon retirement, the pastor will sever **all** pastoral ties with the former congregation. This allows for the church to call an Interim Minister to serve as a bridge between the former pastor and the calling of a new one, and to assist the congregation in its grieving process. A violation of this is a breach of ministerial ethics and may potentially interfere in some one's divine call.

8. Whenever a pastor is to remain within the community of a church just served, their relationship to that church, its Interim Minister, and its newly called pastor shall be evaluated with the wellbeing of that church in mind. What evolves as a working relationship must give first priority to the needs of the church. Individuals' needs are important but must not take priority. The relationship of former pastor, Interim Minister and new pastor must reflect the needs of the church.

CHECKLIST – WHEN A PASTOR IS PLANNING TO RETIRE

When planning to retire, a pastor needs to address issues in the following four (4) realms: **Social Security**, **Concordia Retirement Plan**, **LCMS roster status**, and the **congregation/ministry** being served.

_____ Set a specific date for your retirement. Do not tell the congregation that you plan to retire "in about a year or so."

_____ Inform the congregation, in writing, of the date of your retirement. Under normal circumstances, three (3) to six (6) months' notice is sufficient time for the congregation to plan for your departure and the ensuing vacancy. If there are extenuating circumstances, a longer time period can be given to allow the congregation to prepare for the calling of a new pastor. Send a copy of your letter to the congregation to the District President.

_____ Contact Concordia Plan Services, if you are eligible to receive Concordia Retirement Plan benefits, at least three (3) to five (5) months before your retirement date to ensure enough time to receive and complete the required retirement application.

_____ Contact the Social Security Administration, if you are eligible to apply for S.S. benefits, at least two (2) months prior to the date when you want to begin receiving those benefits.

_____ Apply for Emeritus Status by contacting the District President or his Administrative Assistant. This is required in bylaws of the Synod (Bylaws 2.11.2 – 2.11.2.1) to remain on the clergy roster of the Synod.

_____ Allow the congregation to "mourn" your retirement.

_____ Allow the congregation to give thanks to God for your ministry by hosting a retirement event for you and your family.

_____ If you are named pastor emeritus by the congregation you have served, recognize that this is an honorary title and that it does not imply or include any pastoral duties or responsibilities. See the sample resolution in the supporting document section of this document.

_____ Bring closure to your ministry.

+ Announce publicly and repeatedly that you will no longer be the pastor of the congregation.
+ Make sure that all official records are up-to-date.
+ Develop a transition plan for the church, determining who needs to know what you know, and transmit that information to them so that life in the congregation can continue smoothly without you.
+ Start cleaning out your office as soon as you announce your retirement. There is so much that you will need to sort through and do and the time flies by faster than you can imagine. You should not plan on going back to the office after you retire to finish cleaning things up. When you

walk out the door on the day you retire, you should be totally done and all of your belongings should be out of the church.

+ Make sure that you have something to do IMMEDIATELY to fill your time after your final day in office. That may be taking a trip, working on your house, pursuing a hobby, etc. The point is, PLAN NOW for what you are going to be doing the morning you wake up retired.
+ Prepare for potential loneliness to set in. The chances are the phone calls will stop, the emails will stop, and no one will call to say "hi" or to ask how you are doing, not even your former staff members. Life and ministry in the congregation moves on for everyone else – without you. Be prepared for that to take place.

_____ Good pastoral practice dictates that you do what you can to make sure that your successor is accepted by the members of the congregation and effective in his ministry.

_____ If possible, join a sister congregation. If distance prohibits this or it is impractical for some other reason, you should establish a ministry covenant with the congregation prior to your retirement. The covenant should set strict boundaries for you to remain in the congregation. The document should be signed and dated by you and the chairman of the congregation. It should be reviewed, modified if necessary, signed, and dated on an annual basis.

_____ If you remain in the congregation, you should be absent for at least a year after you retire, especially after the new pastor arrives.

_____ Be firm in maintaining appropriate boundaries

+ Upon retirement, sever all pastoral ties with those you have previously served as the pastor of the congregation.
+ Refuse to triangulate the new pastor in any way.
+ Refuse to conduct or participate in any official acts.
+ Refuse to hold an office in the congregation or serve on any boards or committees.
+ Refuse to counsel members of the congregation.
+ Refuse to teach any classes in the congregation.
+ Refuse to attend any meetings, including those held in the parking lot.
+ Refuse to serve as the vacancy pastor during the call process.
+ Refuse to preach in the congregation.
+ Refuse to serve as the visitation pastor of the congregation.
+ Refuse to participate in any way in the call process.
+ Don't tell members, "I'll be happy to do this if the new pastor says it's okay."
+ Only consider doing something in the congregation if the request is initiated by the new pastor.
+ Don't say anything publicly or privately which would undermine the ministry of the new pastor.

_____ If you are the Circuit Visitor, ask the District President to appoint someone else to handle the call process in the congregation.

_____ If your wife is involved in the life of the congregation (e.g., organist, secretary, chair of the women's group, etc.), she should resign those positions.

_____ If the retiring pastor has grown children who are in leadership positions in the congregation, he should discuss with them the wisdom and challenges of their future involvement in the congregation once a new pastor arrives.

GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING A MINISTRY COVENANT WITH FORMER PASTORS
(See Sample Ministry Covenant in the Support Document Section)

Any Pastor ending his service to a congregation for any reason should be strongly encouraged not to retain membership, or to continue to attend at that congregation.

If a Pastor ending his service to a congregation for any reason desires to retain his membership there or to continue to attend, and the congregational leadership is amenable, the following guidelines are encouraged.

I. Introducing the Ministry Covenant

The goal of this document is to assist the former pastor, representatives of the congregation and the new pastor to form a covenant agreement describing how they will support one another. While the needs of the former pastor and spouse are important, the well-being of the congregation and the relationship with their new pastor is the priority. A healthy relationship with a former pastor can be a wonderful asset to the congregation and future ministry if all parties are able to work together in trust and love.

If a covenant agreement is set in place prior to the arrival of the new Pastor it is to be reviewed within two months of the arrival of the new Pastor. Thereafter having an annual conversation and renewal of the covenant will give opportunity for the body of Christ to be edified.

II. Components of A Ministry Covenant

1. **Thanksgiving**
   A statement giving thanks for the ministry of the former pastor and spouse.

2. **Our Intentions for the immediate future**
   A. A statement from the pastor and spouse that describes their plans for church involvement until the new pastor arrives.
   B. A statement from the congregation leaders and (when he arrives) the new pastor, identifying specific ways they will support the former pastor and his wife spiritually and relationally

3. **How We Live Out Our Agreement Given Certain Situations**
   A. A statement clearly stating that all parties recognize that the former Pastor is no longer Pastor to the congregation.
   B. A statement describing how all parties to the covenant will handle requests for pastoral service from the former pastor
   C. A statement about attendance at weddings, funerals, baptisms when the former pastor and spouse are specifically invited during the initial transition time
   D. A statement about the role of the spouse of the former Pastor within the congregation
   E. A statement about the pastor and spouse's relationship with personal friends within the congregation
   F. A statement about emergency situations causing the covenant agreement to be set aside for a time

4. **Covenant Renewal**
   A. A statement describing involvement of former pastor and spouse within the congregation based on their interest, and needs of the congregation
   B. A statement of how all parties to the covenant handle requests being made by congregation members to the former pastor
   C. A statement describing the former pastor's involvement in congregation decisions especially if he disagrees with the direction
   D. Identify how the covenant will be evaluated, by whom, and when

5. **Ecclesiastical Supervision.**
   A. A copy of the Ministry Covenant shall be forwarded to the office of the District President for his signature.

Signature of Former Pastor and Spouse: _____

Signature of Vacancy/Interim/Settled Pastor:_____

Representative of Congregation:_____

District President: _____

Date: _____ Proposed Renewal Date (within 12 months):_____

III. Notes on the Covenant

Parties to the Covenant – The working principle behind a covenant is this: a covenant manages agreement. The decision to put a covenant agreement in place is a proactive decision to honor the relationship between all parties. The key parties include:

- The new pastor of the congregation
- The members of the congregation (represented by the leaders)
- The former pastor and spouse

While representatives of the congregation represent the congregation in putting the covenant in place and administering the details of the covenant, the congregation needs to be informed about the rationale behind the covenant (whatever is appropriate for the larger congregation to know).

Key Aspects of the Covenant Relationship – If the pastor and spouse are remaining in the congregation, it is important that all parties agree to participate and honor the covenant relationship. That would include:

- Agreement to use the covenant to define the relationship
- Periodic evaluation and renewal of the covenant relationship
- Appropriate changes made to the covenant on the basis of changing circumstances (such as the calling of a new pastor)
- Use of spiritual tools (prayer, confession and absolution, God's Word, etc.) in shaping the relationship, especially during challenging times
- Celebration of the covenant relationship at time of successful completion of the covenant with the pastors, spouses, and leaders of the congregation.

HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION – SSA
1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778)
https://www.ssa.gov/

https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/

CONCORDIA PLAN SERVICES – CPS
1-888-927-7526 or 1-314-965-7580
https://www.concordiaplans.org/

https://www.concordiaplans.org/members/my-financial-benefits/getting-ready-to-retire

https://www.concordiaplans.org/members/my-financial-benefits/saving-for-the-future/understanding-my-pension

DISTRICT PRESIDENT'S OFFICE CONTACTS

Rev. Dr. Jon Braunersreuther
jon.braunersreuther@txlcms.org

Cindy Hilewitz
chilewitz@txlcms.org

Andrew Walker
awalker@txlcms.org

AREA A CONTACTS
Rev. Lincon Guerra – Area A MMF
lincon@txlcms.org

AREA B CONTACTS
Rev. Ben Gonzales – Area B Mission Support Specialist
bgonzales@txlcms.org

Mr. Martin Schardt – Area B Congregation Support Specialist
mschardt@txlcms.org

AREA C CONTACTS
Mr. Larry Reitz – Area C Congregation Support Specialist
lrietz@txlcms.org

Rev. Pete Mueller – Area C Mission Strategist
pmueller@txlcms.org

AREA D CONTACTS

Rev. Dr. David Bahn – Area D Congregational Support Specialist
David.Bahn@txlcms.org

Rev. Dr. Stephen Sohns – Area D Associate Mission Strategist
Steve.Sohns@txlcms.org

LCMS ROSTER STATUS - Continued Eligibility of Individual Members – Please contact the District President's office for instructions on completing this information online.

APPLICATION FOR INACTIVE STATUS

SECTION ONE (Please supply the following information.) District ID No. _____

☐ Ordained Minister ☐ Commissioned Minister

Name _____ _____ _____ Date of this Application _____

First Middle Last

Home Address _____ _____ _____ _____

Street City State Zipcode

Home Telephone _____ Cell Phone No. _____

E-mail Address _____

Last active roster position held _____

Pastor/Teacher/DCE/DCO, etc.

Location _____ _____

Church/School City/State

Concluding date (month, day, year) of last active roster position held _____

Present congregational membership _____ _____

Name City/State

Are you a member in good standing in the congregation listed above?* ☐ Yes ☐ No

(*as determined by the congregation where you hold membership)

SECTION TWO (Please answer the following questions if you are applying for Candidate Status.)

1. ☐ Yes ☐ No Do you have any health problems that would keep you from performing the duties of a ordained/commissioned minister?

2. ☐ Yes ☐ No If the answer to question 1 is "yes," are these health problems expected to be lifelong?

3. Indicate below the extent of your current involvement on a part-time and assisting basis in your respective ministry.

Ordained Ministers		Commissioned Ministers	
☐	Pulpit supply	☐	Teach Part-time
☐	Worship leading	☐	Substitute teach
☐	Distribution of Holy Communion	☐	Youth work
☐	Bible Class teaching	☐	Teach Sunday School
☐	Pastoral visitation	☐	Committee work
☐	Other (specify)	☐	Other (specify)

4. Please explain any limitations on your ability to consider a call.

APPLICATION FOR INACTIVE STATUS, PAGE TWO

SECTION THREE:

Inactive members are advisory members of the Synod. As such, they have all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of advisory membership in the Synod as defined in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod. To remain on the roster of the Synod as an inactive member, an ordained or commissioned minister of religion must be a communicant member in good standing of a congregation which is a member of the Synod and must qualify and make application for one of the following categories: emeritus member or candidate member.

A member may also choose to resign from the roster with the right of applying for reinstatement to the roster at a future date.

I hereby request the following status:

☐ Emeritus Status (Bylaw 2.11.2.1)

An "emeritus" member is one whose membership is held for retention on the roster upon retirement after reaching the age of 55 or for reasons of total and permanent disability. The emeritus member or a representative identified by his district president shall, by January 31, make an annual report to the member's district president. This report shall include current contact information and address the criteria for remaining an inactive member of the Synod.

☐ Candidate Status (Bylaw 2.11.2.2)

A "candidate" member is one who is eligible to perform the duties of any of the offices of ministry as specified in Bylaw section 2.11 but who is not currently an active member or an emeritus member. A candidate may be continued on the roster for a period not to exceed ten years by act of the president of the district through which the person holds membership. A candidate may be further continued on the roster for a period not to exceed five additional years upon recommendation of the applicant's district president and approval of three fourths (75%) of the Council of Presidents. The candidate shall, by January 31, make an annual report to the district president who shall evaluate the member's eligibility for remaining on candidate status. The candidate's report shall include current contact information and address the criteria for remaining on candidate status. Among criteria for determining whether candidate status should be granted or continued are: 1) the health of the applicant; 2) a spirit of cooperation in any efforts to address any unresolved issues involving fitness for ministry; 3) the extent of current involvement on a part-time and assisting basis in his/her respective ministry; and 4) a demonstrated willingness to consider a call or appointment to any of the offices of ministry specified in Bylaw section 2.11.

(Please note: Those applying for Candidate Status must update their PIF, SET, CMIF and ECS forms, as needed, to note any limitations on their ability to consider a call.)

Signature _____ Date _____

ANNUAL REPORTING FORM –EMERITUS STATUS

Please make any necessary changes or additions, sign the form, and return it to the District Office

SECTION ONE (Please supply the following information.)

☐ Ordained Minister ☐ Commissioned Minister

Name _____ _____ _____
First Middle Last

Home Address _____ _____ _____ _____
Street City State Zipcode

Home Phone No. _____ Cell Phone No. _____

E-mail Address: _____

If there is another, seasonal address at which you can be reached during the year, please list it here:

Seasonal Address _____ _____ _____ _____
Street City State Zipcode

Seasonal Phone No. _____

Seasonal E-mail Address _____

Dates when at Seasonal Address _____

Date Emeritus Status granted _____

Present congregational membership _____ _____
Name City/State

If the congregation in which you hold membership is not a Missouri Synod congregation, please state its denominational affiliation. _____

Are you a member in good standing in the congregation listed above?* _____ Yes _____ No

(* as determined by the congregation where you hold membership)

SECTION TWO

The purpose of Section Two is to receive a report from you regarding the level of your involvement in the Synod or limitations in light of your own personal situation and circumstances. Thank you, as you are able, for your contribution to the work of the Synod!

(Bylaw 2.11.2.1 states, "An emeritus member is one whose membership is held for retention on the roster upon retirement after reaching the age of 55 or for reasons of total and permanent disability. The emeritus member or a representative identified by the member's district president shall, by January 31, make an annual report to the member's district president. This report shall include current contact information and address the criteria for remaining an inactive member of the Synod." In the space below, please comment on your efforts during the past year to fulfill these responsibilities as an advisory member of the Synod. Use additional pages if necessary.)

Signature _____ Date _____

Form completed by _____ Relationship to worker _____

AVAILABILITY FOR SERVICE FORM

To: Emeriti Pastors of the Texas District

From: Rev. Dr. Jon Braunersreuther, District President

Re: Availability for Service

Frequently I get requests from congregations for preaching assistance, serving a vacancy, assistance with visitation, etc. It would be helpful to have a list of those who are willing to provide such assistance to congregations. Therefore, I would be most appreciative if you would fill out the brief questionnaire below and return it to me by January 31, _____. Thank you!

- ❒ I am willing to serve a vacancy nearby.
- ❒ I am willing to serve a vacancy even at a distance, perhaps for a more extended period of time, if housing is made available to me.
- ❒ I am willing to assist a vacancy pastor by assuming part of the pastoral responsibilities.
- ❒ I am available for preaching engagements.
- ❒ I would like to do sick/shut-in/hospital visitations for a congregation.

Other: _____

_____

_____

Name: _____

Telephone No.: _____

Email address:_____

INTENTIONAL INTERIM MINISTRY

Visit: http://www.interimministrylcms.org for more information on Intentional Interim Ministry.

Intentional Interim Ministry - a purposeful approach for transitions and challenges

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.

The benefits of Intentional Interim Ministry

- **Healing.** There are circumstances where congregations need assistance in developing an attitude of trust toward pastoral leadership.
- **Thorough resolution.** There are situations that simply take time to untangle. It is important to do what is necessary to reach understanding and closure.
- **New perspectives.** Intentional Interim Ministry allows a congregation to experience different approaches to ministry, and opens eyes to different kinds of pastoral leadership.
- **Setting a fresh course.** Intentional Interim Ministry slows down the call process, allowing the congregation time to make well-informed and deliberate decisions regarding the future course of the church.

The Intentional Interim Ministry Advantage

Though both intentional interim ministers and vacancy pastors can provide clear benefits to congregations, listed are the distinct advantages of an Intentional Interim Pastor who is trained to guide congregations through difficult transitions.

Intentional Interim Minister

- Has special training and experience in effective transition facilitation.
- Sustains the on-going programs and ministries.
- Helps make the transition time an ideal time for dramatic renewal. Can deal with past problems, creating stronger internal structure and vision.
- Preaches and conducts Bible class, usually every Sunday.
- Works to understand what is happening and ministers in a timely, sensitive and relevant manner.
- Helps congregations and individuals handle their grief and sense of loss - especially in instances where there has been conflict, breach of trust, or long-term pastorate.
- Facilitates visioning for future mission and Ministry.

Knowing when Intentional Interim Ministry is appropriate.

If you are wondering whether Intentional Interim Ministry would be a good solution for a specific congregation, ask yourself these questions:

- Are there circumstances that need to be sorted out prior to asking a new pastor to serve?
- Are there deeper issues that need resolving before extending a call?
- Is there a need to re-evaluate mission and ministry?

In conjunction with and under the supervision of the District President and the Circuit Visitor, Intentional Interim Ministry gives a congregation the time and the tools necessary to begin moving forward in a healthy and united way. By helping to strengthen the congregation's identity and a sense of purpose, it enables the congregation to articulate its needs in the process of calling a pastor. This process, in turn, helps to define a desirable pastoral profile as the congregation moves to call a new pastor.

Frequently asked questions regarding Intentional Interim Ministry.

How does one go about getting an Intentional Interim Ministry pastor?
Contact the President's Office for information about getting an Intentional Interim Ministry pastor.

How long does an Intentional Interim Ministry pastor serve a congregation?
This depends on many factors, but typically from one year to two years. The factors depend on the condition of the congregation, the depth of the challenge at hand and congregational leadership. Length of interim ministry is one of the early conversations a congregation will have with a potential interim pastor. It should be noted, as a congregation prepares to receive its next resident pastor, the length of the call is not as important as the health of the church.

Can I get the same benefits from a vacancy pastor as from an intentional interim minister?
A vacancy pastor does meet certain needs of congregations, but is not trained to provide ministry, insight and guidance during the times of transition or crisis.

What is the process a church will go through?
There are five interactive areas of development (or focus points) a congregation will encounter during the Intentional Interim Ministry process. (See: www.centerforcongregationalhealth)

1. Reviewing its historical heritage with honesty and transparency – talking through the disputes, strengths and challenges, and the positives and negatives of past pastorates.
2. Growing through changes in leadership – During the interim, lay leadership often changes as leaders resign and opportunities open up to a wider pool of people. During the Intentional Interim Ministry period there is an opportunity to build on these internal shifts.
3. Defining its identity – During the interim, the congregation uses tools, such as self-study and demographics, to discern its identity.
4. Strengthening its relationship with the circuit, district, and synod – New channels of communication can open up, redefining the congregation's relationships with the larger church body.
5. Exploring new directions for ministry and mission – The window to the future is opened to allow the Holy Spirit to challenge a congregation to answer the question, "what is God calling us to do, at this time and in this place?"

Circuit Visitor's Role in Assisting a Congregation Interested in an Intentional Interim

1. When a congregation becomes vacant, one of the considerations that the district president and the circuit visitor may consider is that of "Intentional Interim Pastor." This is especially true if the congregation has experienced significant conflict to work through. Additional issues that would give rise to consideration of an "Intentional Interim Pastor" include but are not necessarily limited to the following:
   a. Following sexual misconduct by the former pastor, or another staff member
   b. Following a long term pastorate
   c. Following financial irregularities by the former pastor, or staff member
   d. Following boundary violations by the former pastor; e.g. sexual, gambling, embezzlement, overbearing personality, etc.
   e. Retirement of a Senior Pastor in a large congregation with a multiple staff
   f. Alignment issues between church and school, which often are manifested in conflicted relationships between the pastoral and teaching staff or a silo mentality where each exists independently of the other.

2. The district president should be notified when a congregation is considering an "Intentional Interim Pastor". The district president has a vested interest in making sure that the congregations under his supervision are healthy and functional. Because he is aware of the conflicted circumstances in the congregation the district president may suggest that the congregation consider issuing a non-tenured call to an interim pastor.

3. An Intentional Interim Pastor will guide the congregation through the following five developmental tasks:
   a. Coming to terms with the congregation's history
   b. Discovering a new congregational identity
   c. Managing congregational leadership shifts
   d. Renewing denominational linkage with the district and with the LCMS
   e. Commitment to a new future

4. There are seven other developmental tasks that a congregation also can work on during the in between times:
   a. The necessity to rebuild the congregational "infrastructure"
   b. Evaluation of and removal of staff members if necessary
   c. Financial/stewardship issues
   d. Conflicts over issues or congregational agenda
   e. Interpersonal or intergroup conflicts
   f. Getting closure with the previous pastor
   g. Communication Improvement

5. The Intentional Interim Pastor works closely with the district president, the circuit visitor and the congregation to call a new pastor. The Intentional Interim Pastor may work with the Call Committee. The Intentional Interim Pastor is not eligible for the Call. The Intentional Interim Pastor does not name the next pastor. The Intentional Interim Pastor does not attend Call Voters Meeting.
   a. The normal "non-tenured call" for an Intentional Interim is 18 months.

b. Much like a vacancy pastor an Intentional Interim Pastor is usually not eligible for call consideration to the congregation where he has served as an Interim.

6. Other considerations:
   a. The former pastor should consider not remaining a member of the congregation.
   b. The circuit visitor and the district president have a responsibility to walk with and support the Intentional Interim Pastor in every appropriate way.

SUPPORTING (SAMPLE) DOCUMENTS

A Ministry Covenant with Pastor (retiring pastor), Pastor (incoming pastor) and_____Lutheran Church

Preamble

The LCMS Texas District guidelines states:

Any called worker ending his service to a congregation for any reason is strongly encouraged not to retain membership, or to continue to attend at that congregation.

If a called worker ending his/her service to a congregation for any reason desires to retain his/her membership there or to continue to attend, and the congregational leadership is amenable, the establishment of an agreement is highly encouraged. The following guidelines may serve as a model for such an agreement.

I. The Purposes of a Ministry Covenant

This document describes how Pastor _____ and Mrs. _____(retiring), members and representatives of _____Lutheran Church, and Pastor _____ and Mrs._____(incoming), will relate to each other, love, and support one another as brothers and sisters in Christ and servants of Christ. While the needs of Pastor and Mrs._____ are important, the well-being of _____ Lutheran Church and the relationship Pastor and Mrs. _____is the priority. A healthy relationship with a former called worker can be a wonderful asset to the congregation and future ministry if all parties are able to work together in trust and love.

Pastor (incoming)_____ is aware of this covenant and has been invited to provide input to the final version. Pastor _____ and the _____ Mission and Ministry Council will be invited to review this covenant on an annual basis.

II. Our Ministry Covenant

A. Thanksgiving

We thank God for Pastor and Mrs. _____. _____ Lutheran Church has been blessed by their ## years of service.

The changes at _____ under Pastor's leadership are too numerous to list but include the establishment of _____, building of the Worship Center, the establishment of _____ Worship, the development of the current Governance Model along with policy guidelines, expanding the role of Elders, Stephen and Prayer Ministries, to name a few. He has guided us through two flood recoveries and the current pandemic.

Pastor has faithfully preached God's Word, instructed us and equipped us for service and provided spiritual guidance. He has focused us on our responsibility of

sharing with others, especially the sharing of "True Riches in Jesus." For this we are eternally grateful.

Mrs. _____ has faithfully served along with Pastor, providing leadership to our worship services, leading _____, teaching bible classes and implementing and developing small group studies. She and Pastor have provided leadership in establishing numerous mission opportunities, overseas trips for members of the congregation and leadership to outside groups, including _____.

A Retirement Celebration thanking Pastor and Mrs. _____ for their service is scheduled for DATE starting at TIME. For those wanting to give a retirement gift in recognition of Pastor's service, gifts can be given at the reception or through _____ on-line giving. If giving on-line, please note that your contribution is for Pastor _____ Retirement.

Please also join us for the Celebration Worship Services on Sunday, DATE at TIME and TIME.

Blessings, _____ Chairman

B. Plans and Intentions for the Immediate Future

1. Mrs. _____ and I will end our church involvement and connections with _____ Lutheran Church on Date/year. This is a difficult thing to do. We have been greatly blessed during our years here. The people of _____ have been a source of friendship, fellowship, encouragement, and support during these past 16 years. You have been gracious and understanding toward us, and we have sought to reflect that same grace and understanding toward all of you. But it is vitally important for us and for God's people at _____ that we have a clear ending so that the new senior pastor can have a clear line of accountability and authority.

2. Pastor _____ will be installed as Senior Pastor on DATE. He will be the new senior pastor, and I will defer all decisions to him for the last three weeks of my ministry here. We will work together for a smooth transition. I will make myself available to Pastor _____ for any needed input or consultation. But I am committed to allowing him to steer the ship and take the lead as soon as possible.

3. Until that time, I will continue to serve faithfully and energetically as your senior pastor. I will not shirk my responsibilities, nor attempt a long down-hill coast to the finish line. There is important work to be done, and I am committed to serving well, and "running through the tape" at the end of this race.

4. But in order that we can make the transition to God's next adventure of life and ministry, and so that you can have the best possible future with your new senior

pastor, wecommit ourselves to sever church relationships for a period of at least one year from my retirement date. We will retain friendships, and are willing to engage socially on occasion, *but these will be strictly personal and social in nature, no church talk.*

5. Ways to support Pastor and Mrs. _____ during their first year after Pastor's retirement.
   Because of how much we value Pastor and Mrs. _____, as the leaders of _____ Lutheran Church, we the Mission and Ministry Council and Pastoral staff desire to continue to support them in their first year of retirement and beyond. We invite all the people of _____ to join us in this support. To that end, we have prepared a listof things we are pledging to do, and we strongly encourage you to do as well.

   a. We want the Pastor and Mrs. _____ to have the ability to call for pastoral care as theymay need it or for any other need they may have, be it spiritual or anything else.
   b. We pledge to pray for Pastor and Mrs. _____ both as a congregation and in ourpersonal prayer lives.
   c. Members of _____ may socialize with Pastor and Mrs. _____. Please be aware thatthey may need space and/or want to limit in-person exposure for the balance of the pandemic. If they turn down a social invitation, please donot take it personally. Your understanding in these situations will be a support to them.
   d. A big way that members of _____ can support Pastor and Mrs. _____ is by avoiding "church talk" with Pastor and Mrs._____. Please do not ask them what they think of anything and please do not volunteer what you think. This wouldplace them in a difficult and awkward situation. A good way to support them is to not place them into such a position. Talk about the weather, sports, family, what they are doing with their time, etc., but not _____ Lutheran Church.
   e. Please support them by sending notes of well wishes, encouragement, prayers and blessings, we miss y'alls, etc. You can do this even in the Summer or Fall. They won't stop loving that kind of thing 3 weeks from now.
   f. We will support them by not inviting them to church events. Please understand that Pastor and Mrs. _____ will be stepping away from _____ Lutheran Church for a period of one year. This is not because they don't love _____ Lutheran Church and the people here. (Quite the opposite!) It is because the Texas District strongly recommends this period for the new Senior Pastor to get acclimated. In fact, under the direction of the Texas District, Pastor

(retiring pastor), Pastor (incoming pastor) and the (council, board, etc.) of _____ Lutheran Church have written and signed a ministry covenant that includes this one-year step-away period. We believe that it is the intention of (retiring pastor and wife) to be worshipping, active members of _____ after this one-year period. YOU can support Pastor and Mrs. _____by not inviting them to church events, understanding this one-year period, and not pressuring them to interrupt it.

g. Part of the aforementioned ministry covenant, as directed by the Texas District, includes the agreement that Pastor _____ will not perform pastoral functions. This includes baptisms, weddings, funerals, etc. You can support him by not putting him in the difficult position of turning down a request. He would have to turn down the request because of theagreement in the ministry covenant, not because he wouldn't want to doit. Your understanding would be a big support to him.

h. In Summary:
   - Please pray for Pastor and Mrs. _____.
   - Please feel free to socialize with them, they enjoy the members of _____ Lutheran Church.
   - Please understand if they decline social invitations.
   - Please send cards, letters and notes of encouragement and support. They are appreciated anytime.
   - Please avoid "church talk" with them.
   - Please do not ask Pastor _____ to perform pastoral functions.
   - Thank you so much for your prayers, blessings and understanding!

C. How We Live Out Our Agreement Given Certain Situations

1. As of DATE/YEAR, Pastor _____ will no longer be a Called worker at _____ Lutheran Church. ·
2. Should the need arise for our pastoral care (severe sickness, death, ·other personal crisis), we will interface directly with Pastor (incoming pastor) to determine the best way to receive pastoral care.
3. We have been invited to one wedding and informed of one specific request for a funeral. We hope to attend the wedding but will have no official participation in the service. Should the previously-agreed-to funeral be requested, we will work out any necessary details of how to accommodate that request. Pastor (incoming pastor) and the members of the Mission and Ministry Council are aware of this specific request and situation. I will make no such arrangements from this time forward.
4. Mrs. _____ and I will both retain personal friendships with congregational members. We mayoccasionally be part of social events at which several members of _____ are present. We will not, however, engage in conversations about the church, ministries, staff, or Pastor

(incoming pastor) (other than to agree that he is a tremendous blessing to the church and Kingdom of God!).

5. I will not be involved in congregation decisions especially if I disagree with the direction of the congregation. I will no longer be pastor here and commend God's people and this church to the care and leadership of Pastor _____.

D. Covenant Renewal

1. Pastor (incoming pastor) and the _____ Mission and Ministry Council will evaluate this covenant on an annual basis.

2. Should any updates to this covenant be established all parties shall receive a copy.

E. Ecclesiastical Supervision.

A copy of the Ministry Covenant shall be forwarded to the office of the District President forhis signature.

III. Signatures

Signature of Former Pastor and Spouse: _____

Signature of Vacancy/Interim/Settled Pastor:_____

Representative of Congregation:_____

District President: _____

Date: _____ Proposed Renewal Date (within 12 months):_____

Notes on the Covenant

Parties to the Covenant - The working principle behind a covenant is this: a covenant manages agreement. The decision to put a covenant agreement in place is a proactive decision to honor the relationship between all parties. The key parties include:

- The new called worker of the congregation
- The members of the congregation (represented by the leaders)
- The former called worker and spouse

While representatives of the congregation represent the congregation in putting the covenant in place and administering the details of the covenant, the congregation needs to be informed about the rationale behind the covenant (whatever is appropriate for the larger congregation to know).

Key Aspects of the Covenant Relationship - If the former called worker and spouse are remainingin the congregation, it is important that all parties agree to participate and honor the covenant relationship. That would include:

- Agreement to use the covenant to define the relationship
- Periodic evaluation and renewal of the covenant relationship
- Appropriate changes made to the covenant based on changing circumstances (such as thecalling of a new worker)
- Use of spiritual tools (prayer, confession and absolution, God's Word, etc.) in shaping the relationship, especially during challenging times.

SAMPLE HONORARY TITLE FOR PASTOR _____

WHEREAS, Pastor _____ has faithfully, effectively and honorably served as an ordained minister in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for _____ years, including _____ years at _____ congregation, AND

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod designates its retired ordained and commissioned ministers with emeritus status, AND

WHEREAS, Bestowal of the designation of emeritus status upon Pastor _____ by _____ Lutheran Church (and School) may open opportunities for him to continue service to the church-at-large in his retirement, AND

WHEREAS, Bestowal of the designation of emeritus status neither grants nor implies any rights or privileges with regard to the exercise of the office of the ministry at _____, AND

WHEREAS, Bestowal of the designation of emeritus status in no way financially obligates _____ congregation, THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, That _____ congregation express its gratitude to God and to Pastor _____ for his _____ years of faithful, effective and honorable ministry by bestowing upon Pastor _____ the honorary title of "Pastor Emeritus of _____ Lutheran Church (and School)," AND BE IT FINALLY

RESOLVED, That all present this day at _____ congregational meeting rise and with grateful hearts for the blessings of Pastor _____ (and his wife, _____) to the ministry and life of _____ congregation join in singing the doxology.

Approved: (month, day, year)
Congregational Meeting
_____, President

DATE: January 13, 2026

TO: Texas District Pastors and Congregation Presidents

FROM: Rev. Dr. Jon Braunersreuther, President

SUBJECT: Compensation Guidelines for Guest Preacher / Lecturer

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God has blessed the church with servants in ministry who are devoted to bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to His people. When considering the compensation of a professional church worker, God's people are called to support and provide for those who "prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..." (Eph 4: 11). Please utilize these guidelines in determining reasonable compensation when a pastor serves as guest preacher, lecturer, teacher or liturgist.

Worship	1 Service	Additional Service(s) Same Day
Preaching and Liturgy	$350	$150 each
Preaching Only	$275	$150 each
Liturgy Only	$180	$150 each
Bible Class/Presentation	$200	$150 each

Additional compensation to be considered"

a. Mileage - IRS Rate
b. Food and Lodging (if over 200 miles round trip)

These are only guidelines; however, if is recommended that congregations not go below the suggested rate.

Texas District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1221 Satellite View | Round Rock, TX 78665 | P: 512.926.4272 | TF: 800.951.3478 | F: 512.926.1006
www.txlcms.org