TRANSITIONS
in Pastoral Ministry

A Resource for Pastors Experiencing Change
I. DISCERNING THE CALL

God's plan of salvation begins with a call. The Lord calls Abram (and Sarai) to go and start a new mission congregation in Promised Land (Gen 12). Well, that's not exactly what God says to Abram, but it's close. The whole Biblical revelation of Christ's redeeming work on the cross begins with a call. And a host of God's calls to women and men to do His work of mission and ministry fills the rest of the pages of Scripture.

What about us, how can we discern the Holy Spirit's call upon our lives? Some of us may be standing on the threshold of our first call. Some of us have been working faithfully for years in a particular place of ministry but may be experiencing now a sense of restlessness. How do we know God's will over the seasons of ministry?

The following list of guidelines for discerning the call is intended to stir your thinking and your prayers. It is also meant to help as we seek God’s will and to remind us that seeking to understand Jesus' direction upon our lives is a great spiritual endeavor that can finally only be known in community with God and with others. This is not an exhaustive list for discernment, of course, but we hope it gives you a good place to start.

When considering whether to “stay” or to “go”, it's important to develop a good, holy set of reasons for either decision. A "pro & con" list may seem too simple to help, but God can use such time-tested methods to open your eyes to His will.

However, before you pursue any next call, you need to spend considerable time evaluating your present call. The "grass is always greener on the other side" syndrome can be very seductive. Asking a spouse if you are married, and along with a trusted, valued Christian brother or sister, can help you evaluate your current call. This is an essential component to hearing the feedback one needs for an accurate evaluation.

At the same time, we need to be open to the growing edges of ministry a new call might bring. Staying in a call only because it's comfortable is not typically counted among the Biblical reasons for knowing God's will! Recall Peter's significant step of faith in Acts 10 by making himself available to meet in the home of a Gentile. His faithfulness to moving out of his "comfort zone" helped advance the kingdom.

Getting Godly counsel through a wise mentor in ministry is another important consideration. Is there a seasoned, mature pastor you can reach out to for advice? Would asking two or three trusted leaders in the congregation for prayer and conversation be an option for us—clearly this would be confidential? When the Lord was calling young Samuel, Samuel sought the guidance of Eli every step of the process (1 Sam 3). That's a Biblical template for us all.

No clear discernment of God's will can be received apart from an active prayer life. To know God's heart for you, your heart needs to be open to God. In Acts 16, Paul finds Lydia leading a prayer meeting near Philippi. Because Lydia was open and seeking Jesus in prayer, the Holy Spirit converted her and her household. As a result, she became the host and minister of the first congregation in the western world.
Consider career counseling, too. Perhaps the college you attended offers such an option to their graduates. Counselors may also make such assessments available. Ask colleagues about other opportunities for similar professional services.

Two key questions are particularly important to lay before the Lord in a time of discernment: 1) Am I sensing a release from my current call, and 2) do I feel "a holy restlessness" inside of me that won't go away? Devote ample time to hearing God's voice in response. As was said above, discerning a call cannot be accomplished in any healthy way without significant input from spouse and family. No one is in ministry alone, but always in concert with the people God has given as most important in our lives. If a new call will not work for our marriage and family, it will not work at all.

Finally, discerning the call is always about being faithful to the Lord. During a missionary journey, Paul was adamant to go to Asia or east to the Black Sea region of Bithynia (Acts 16). That was his agenda. But God had a different one for Paul's ministry. As we know, the Holy Spirit directed Paul to Macedonia instead. Paul's willingness to follow obediently in this different and unexpected call is one of the chief characteristics of faithfulness that sets Paul's example apart for all of us to emulate.

II. ACCEPTING YOUR FIRST CALL

A first call is an exciting new chapter in the life of a pastor and his/her family. While full of joy and expectation, it can also be very stressful season of change. The compounded stress of multiple life changes such as moving into a new community, house, and geographical area add to the already significant stress of taking on a new pastoral position. We have compiled a list of items for new LCMC pastors to consider as they accept their first call. This list is designed to help pastors who have been offered their first call; careful consideration should be given to the topics listed in Section VI of this Transition’s document “Discerning the Call”, before moving on to the items below

A. Negotiate Salary & Benefits Package. This should be done with the help of an experienced and trusted mentor pastor. Many details will vary based on region, cost of living, and context of the congregation. Generally a compensation package will include:
1. Base Salary
2. Housing Allowance
   a. Is there a parsonage? If so, is rent expected?
   b. Is there assistance for purchasing a home?
3. Social Security Allowance
   a. What percentage is the congregation paying?
4. Health Insurance & Retirement Plan
5. Vacation
a. How much total time and how many Sundays?

6. Moving Costs
   a. We recommend that the congregation pays the cost of the move

7. Cell Phone & Auto Allowance
   a. If a cell phone is expected for the pastor to be reached, either the congregation provides the cost of the cell phone or contributes to its expense.
   b. Most congregations will offer a per/mile rate for miles accumulated while carrying out pastoral duties. Check on the IRS/mile compensation allowance.

8. Continuing Education Budget & Time
   a. Congregations may offer a fixed amount for approved continuing education expense and time allowed. Many congregations have policies in place. If you are interested please contact LCMC for referrals.

9. Equipment Requirements
   a. Computers may be provided by the congregation, however the equipment then is intended only for ministry related activities. If you do not have a computer of your own, you may want to negotiate help from the congregation in order to purchase a compatible computer/software.

B. Tax & Social Security. It is essential that a pastor should consider consulting with a CPA or tax preparer familiar with the state and federal tax implications for pastors. Find someone with expertise. A large tax bill after a first year of a call can create significant challenges for a pastor and his family as well as a congregation. Preparation and research can save a great deal of frustration and pain later.

In the case of a Contract Call, the nature of the call should be clarified with the congregation to ascertain whether ministerial tax benefits will be available.

C. Ordination & Installation Service.
   There is no one-way to hold a service of ordination and installation. The purpose of an ordination service is to recognize and celebrate the call of God on someone’s life into the public office of ministry. Usually the service of ordination involves the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6 "They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.") The service could also include a time to make a profession of the commitment we have through ordination to uphold the teachings of Holy Scripture and to adhere to the Creeds and Confessions of the Lutheran Church. The purpose of installation is to recognize and celebrate the special relationship between the pastor and the congregation. The planning and
implementation of these services can serve as a great energy builder for you and your congregation. If you want to see models of both an ordination service and an installation service, please contact either our Coordinator for Pastoral Ministry or our Service Coordinator. Both of them have contact information on our website: www.lcmc.net.

D. Building Strong Relationships in the First Call

1. God: Our devotional life is essential to our witness and leadership as pastors. Turning to God continually is the model of leadership given to us by Jesus example. Be faithful to read God’s Word for the purpose of spiritual growth. Too many pastors only open the Book for sermon preparation. God speaks to us through His Word. Do not neglect the Scriptures.

2. Prayer is an essential component of a healthy spiritual life. Set aside time to pray for the members of the congregation, for the mission of the congregation, for yourself and your family. The church will never rise up until it first gets to its knees. Be on your knees before the Lord of the Church!

3. Congregation: These are the primary relationships of your ministry. Building strong congregation relationships takes time, prayer, and a

listening. Invest in developing leaders in the congregation who will come along side you in the mission of the church. We are in the “people business” and they are the ones the Lord has called you to serve, as well as all those they invite into the fellowship.

4. Other Pastors. One of the things that LCMC has become known for is a strong collegial atmosphere. We are accountable to one another and can look to each other for fellowship and support. Consider becoming a part of a district, a ministerial group in your community, an on-line discussion group, or an accountability team. Again, for resources in this area, contact the Coordinator for Pastoral Ministry.

E. Develop Realistic Expectations. We are never called to be successful, only faithful. Do not let the chasing after numbers steal the joy out of mission and ministry. We plant and water, but it is God who brings the growth.

A guideline for time spent at work is as follows: we are called to work at least 40 hours a week, with additional time given to the same degree we expect our people to volunteer. So if you expect people to give 10 hours/week in volunteering, then you will add that same amount to your weekly schedule, making a 50 hour week.

Every pastor will develop her/his own
schedule. A regular day off is essential to maintain health in ministry. Vacation time is time away, do not neglect this part of your life and ministry. To do so is a recipe for burnout and cynicism.

F. **Set and Maintain Personal Boundaries.** You were a person, an individual before you were a pastor. You have a specific background and history, you have unique personality and personal traits. The only pastoral identity you have is the one that you had from the beginning of your life.

You are not expected to know everything, you are not expected to be perfect, you are not expected to be anyone other than who you are. You may not be perfectly skilled or completely gifted to do everything that is expected. Give yourself a break. People in congregations may have other expectations, but you are the only one responsible to maintain your own identity. Let your identity be formed by God Almighty who made you, and by the people who genuinely love you.

G. **Keep Family as a Priority.** You will suffer as a pastor if you neglect your primary relationships. If you are married, if you have children these are your first priority in ministry. If you are single, make certain that you have trusted friends to whom you can turn both to share the goods things around us and our troubles.

H. **School Debt and Repayment.** LCMC has a [Seminary Debt Relief](#) Fund from which offers gives grants of up to $5000 each year (depending on contributions) for the first 5 years after graduation. Applications are made to the Director of Operations and information can be found on our website.

I. **Conflict Management and Reconciliation.** Elsewhere on our website you will find a document called “Transitions in Your Church: Change happens.” This a great resource for dealing with change and conflict in the congregation. Every church goes through times of transition and change, and change always creates conflict.

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### III. YOU’VE TAKEN ANOTHER CALL

Congratulations! You’ve received a new call to carry out the Lord’s work through a new congregation. The process may have seemed long and tiring, but you’re excited for the new challenge of ministry the Lord is calling you to lead. You’ve already discerned the season for change, put together your resume, been in consistent prayer, interviewed once, twice, and have now said “yes!” It’s been a mixture of stress and bless, and you’re ready to move forward…but what should moving forward look like?

We recognize that every pastor, family and congregation will have different ways to handle this transition. We simply
recommend that pastors seek to end a previous call well, in order to start a new call even better. With that in mind, here are some healthy suggestions for pastors and their families to consider as they launch a new call:

A. Before you start your new call, it is key for all parties to understand the expectations to the vision and mission. Hopefully this is based upon a pastor’s personality and spiritual gifts, and the vision and mission of the new church. If a pastor is going to bring change, then change is what the congregation’s leadership ought to have been looking for. If you are hoping to create change and the new call wants maintenance, it is obvious that particular call is not for you. Take heart, God will provide the correct call that He wants for you to lead. In addition, we suggest pastors request to review any assessments or evaluations the congregation or staff have participated in over the last 1 to 5 years.

B. When you do say “yes” to a new call, whom should you tell first, and when? When its time to resign your current call, it would be best to first share your news with staff members and/or council leadership. Express thankfulness and encouragement. From there, work together as leaders as to how to graciously to break the news to the congregation at large. This can be through a letter sent to every household or through a worship service. Be creative, so your move can be seen and received as a kingdom moment. Email may be too impersonal and not everyone uses Facebook. Seek to avoid leaking the news to just individuals or friends as it can create a grapevine, igniting the possibility for gossip, inaccuracies and hurt feelings.

There is no “one best way” to tell your congregation at large that you’re taking a new call, so it is ultimately up to you. You know your people best. We do recommend, however, you always share with grace. Grace always builds up the body. Tell the folks how much you love them in Christ and what a gift they are to you and the community. Express how they have taught you to love as Jesus loves. Remind them of God’s goodness in the past and how God will guide them in His goodness into the future. Express moments when the congregation walked by faith and conquered fear. We recommend a pastor never scold the congregation, staff or leadership teams as the pastor walks out the door. If issues need to be resolved, they can be done so in a separate process. Like a great gymnastics performance, always “stick the landing.” In other words, people always remember how things ended. So, end well with grace.

C. Concern for spouse and family. Keep in the mind the variety of emotions your own family might be experiencing. They love and support you, but that doesn’t mean moving is easy. They are leaving behind friends at both school and work. We suggest you create an atmosphere of “we are serving the Lord together as a
family”, now looking forward to the new opportunities God will guide and provide.

D. Become aware of the process of leaving and entering. In your excitement, we recommend that you pray and plan through the entire process. Don’t rush. Ask yourself, “How can I end my current call so well that my family, my current congregation and my new congregation are all blessed?”

E. Generally speaking, when receiving a new call, there is at least a 30-day discernment period. Some congregations may have a longer policy in writing, so be sure to check the congregation’s constitution and by-laws. If you know right away your decision, it is polite to immediately express your response to the new congregation’s call team. Therefore, if your answer is “no” to a new call, it allows the call team to keep its momentum in continuing the search. If your answer is “yes” to the new call, it is suggested that you give both your former and new congregations at least a 30-day notice so all parties can properly prepare for the transition. (Again, check your congregation’s constitution and by-laws). If a pastor has any unused vacation time, it is best used during the 30-day period. The new congregation is not expected to provide paid vacation to start the new call.

F. Moving expenses. Generally speaking, the new congregation is expected to pay all moving expenses. This starts the new call with a great gesture of love towards the pastor’s family. If expense is not the issue, then it is appropriate for the new congregation to help provide the necessary people-power in the physical move. We also suggest that before a pastor purchases a home in the new community, to consider renting for a while. This allows the pastor to get a better feel for the community in which they serve. Any administrative concerns, such as expense accounts or record keeping, can be shared between the pastor and the new call.

IV. PREVENTATIVE CARE

While some transitions in ministry are unavoidable, there are things we can do to prepare ourselves for some of the inevitable changes that occur in the life of every pastor.

A. Spiritual Health and Care. The best thing any of us can do to prepare for whatever our futures may bring is to develop and maintain a strong relationship with Jesus. Establishing and maintaining a daily habit of personal Bible study and devotional time and seeking to be continually in communion with God through prayer serves all of us well at all times and especially in times of crisis and transition. It’s also important to be engaged relationally with others who can encourage and support us in our faith; this might be done through a mentoring or peer mentoring situation,
or through a small prayer group or accountability group.

B. **Physical Health.** Don’t neglect diet and exercise in your zeal for ministry. We are more productive and better able to carry out the demands of ministry when our bodies are strong and our diets are healthy. Regular check-ups and preventative health care are also essential.

C. **Emotional Health.** What are you doing to maintain your emotional health? Do you have friends and/or mentors that you can share your struggles and challenges with and who will hold you accountable? Do you have a personal identity outside of your role in ministry? Do you belong to a ministerial group that offers support and encouragement? Do you regularly spend time alone with your spouse away from your ministry? Do you have friends outside of your church or ministry organization?

D. **Continuing Education and Sabbatical.** Lifelong learning is essential to any ministry and helps to provide the intellectual and spiritual stimulation that will keep us fresh and renewed in our work. Are you regularly setting aside time for study? Have you and your congregational leadership talked about a schedule for a pastoral sabbatical?

E. **Career Counseling.** Times of transition can provide opportunities to think about whether it might be time to consider another type of ministry or even another line of work. Career counseling sometimes helps us to discover how we might use our gifts and talents in new and richly rewarding ways.

V. **FINANCIAL PLANNING**

What are you doing to prepare financially for possible emergencies in your future? Are you setting aside enough money to adequately provide for you and your family during a transition period between calls or during a period of forced unemployment due to illness or disability? Are you adequately insured for catastrophic events?

A. **Taking Care of Family Relationships.** Don’t neglect your spouse and children during times when ministry is going well and certainly when there is undo stress in your work. A wise pastor is always careful to make family relationships a priority in their lives.

B. **Personal Exit Strategy.** Knowing that your vocational ministry career will inevitably come to an end at some point, do you have a plan for the rest of your life? Have you thought about where you will live and what will you do? If you live in a parsonage, will you purchase a house, and if so, have you prepared financially for this? Will you do interim ministry, pulpit supply, or perhaps some kind of volunteer work?
C. **Financial Planning.** Unexpected transitions can be a strain on your personal and family finances. Financial matters can put an additional emotional strain upon yourself and your family. Making a plan to address these expenses as soon as possible can make your time of transition easier on your family and yourself. We encourage you to seek financial counseling early on in your transition for any support that may be helpful.

D. **Backup Plan.** We recommend that every pastor, at any point in your career, have a financial backup plan in case of sudden times of transition. We recommend you review your current assets and plan for 6 months receiving no income. Review your current savings. Do you have enough saved to pay your bills for 6 months? Do you have any large items which you can sell for income, such as vehicles or furniture? Do you have any unnecessary family expenses that you can stop, such as cable or gym memberships? Being prepared is not just for Scouts!

E. **Debt-Management.** As you transition, we recommend you do not neglect any other financial debts or obligations, such as student loans. The financial burden of paying loans can sometimes be lessened by negotiating with your lender or financial agency for a different payment schedule.

F. **Bi-vocational.** Consider tent-making. That is, consider becoming bi-vocational: holding a non-ministry job in addition to doing the work of ministry. The Bible reminds us of the story of Paul, who was supported by his daily trade, making tents, while he continued to share the gospel message (Acts 18:1-4). What opportunities are there for you in your current community, or elsewhere?

G. **Housing.** As soon as you begin your transition, you will need to prepare for transitional housing if needed. If you are in a parsonage, we recommend you prepare for a move. Communicate with the congregation early on regarding the parsonage, including dates for moving, and address other details that may be easier the sooner you discuss them. You may want to consider affordable transitional housing, such as rental housing, to give you time to make future plans for your family. If you own a home and plan to move, you may benefit by preparing your home for sale early in your transition.

H. **Major Medical.** As you transition, we recommend you keep in mind the need for continuing medical insurance, and avoid losing medical insurance for you and your family throughout
I. **Retirement Plan.** Consult the LCMC office with concerns and questions regarding your 403-B retirement plan.

**VI. PERSONAL CRISIS**

Circumstances and events in a person’s life may necessitate specialized care in order to remain in or take time away from ministry to recover, heal, and renew. Such situations may include an acute and/or chronic illness, the death of a loved one, divorce, personal financial hardship, natural disasters, addictions, emotional burnout, and even loss of faith. In any case, the pastor may be unable to minister, rendered temporarily incapable of coping emotionally, physically, and/or spiritually with the responsibilities of pastoral ministry. Loving and healthy intervention, within a supportive community, is often required for the sake of all involved. Where does one start?

Direct, honest, and open communication among congregational and association leadership with all parties involved, under confidentiality, is essential. There is a problem, and people are suffering. Jesus offers wise counsel in Matthew, Chapter 18 that involves compassionate, yet firm intervention, as to how to proceed, both in attitude and in method. The goal is restoration into health, life, and joy in the Lord for ministry within His kingdom.

A. **Community.** A loving and prayerful, accountable and supportive community of grace and mercy is critical to a pastor’s (or anyone’s) personal healing and recovery. Our ability to cope with life’s hardships and transitions often correlates positively with the greater number of and increasing quality of one’s relationships. Pastors who feel emotionally isolated from loving support tend to be at greater risk for personal crisis and addictions when faced with life’s hardships and transitions. Supportive relationships may be found among family members, but certainly also includes trusted friends, colleagues, congregation and association leadership, and professional counselors. Truly, we are called to bear one another’s burdens, and, thus fulfill the law of Christ: “To love one another as I have loved you.”

B. **Resources.** Intervention may necessitate addressing one’s cognitive beliefs, learning new coping skills, and establishing boundaries and behavioral disciplines toward health and life. It may also include healing prayer, spiritual disciplines, and thoughtful consideration of one’s gifts and call. Print/video resources, personal mentoring/coaching, and/or professional services may aid such processes toward healthy ministry.

C. **Protocols.** Not all pastors may recognize that they are in personal crisis. It may take the intervention of a friend or church leader to address the issue. The LCMC Coordinator for Pastoral Ministry and/or the LCMC Ministry Board can help advise early in the process, in conjunction with congregational
leadership, friends, and family – serving as advocates for health.

As an association of congregations, we all bear responsibility for each other, especially in times of personal crisis and need. Each situation is contextual and unique. Appropriate care may require the resources of the larger community. May we all be generous with our time, talents, and resources – signs of God’s gracious love.

VII. YOU HAVE BEEN ASKED TO RESIGN

There is no perfect pastor and there is no perfect congregation. There are times when, for whatever reason, a call to ministry doesn’t work out the way we had hoped. Looking back, there are always things that we could have done differently and words we wish we had never said…but you can’t go back. When your ministry has come to an end there are some things to consider, and hopefully this can be done in concert with the leadership of the congregation, the people of the congregation, and with the Holy Spirit.

Some of the reasons that a ministry might be ended are:

- The congregation is no longer able to meet their financial commitments
- The senior pastor resigns and your resignation is now required as well
- The needs of the congregation and gifts of the pastor do not match
- You have committed immoral or criminal behavior, and this ends any further severance or financial compensation
- The congregation is broken and either renewal, reconciliation or resolution to conflict is not possible at this time

There are significant mental, emotional and spiritual issues when a ministry is ended, each of us needs to be aware of those dynamics and ask for help…and it can be as simple as having someone that you trust to talk to, to process all of this with, and come to acceptance of the situation. You may want to see a professional counselor to work through the issues that naturally follow. At some point you will want to develop a plan to be able to move forward.

Even though your ministry has been ended in a given time and place it is important to behave in a way that honors Christ. Accepting your own responsibility for the situation, offering genuine sorrow for what has happened, and being humble in attitude will only help make the transition as positive as possible. It is essential that you also honor the 8th commandment, guarding your heart and mouth so that no condemnation or gossip would ever come from you. As pastors and leaders in the church of Christ we are called to a higher standard. This is not to say that the people of the congregation are without blame, and there is no expectation that truth should not be spoken, but this must be done in a way that would be most helpful to the people of the congregation, it’s leaders and whoever might follow you in ministry. The mission of the church is the ultimate priority.
Creating an honest and respectful environment in this time will give you the greatest chance of coming to a peaceful and honorable close to your ministry. “Leaving well” needs to be a priority for you, especially if you expect to continue in pastoral ministry. Besides, there are some important things that need to be considered.

Severance pay is often a part of the discussion when a ministry is ended…and there are no absolute answers, but at least the following things need to be discussed.

- **Housing:** If you are living in a parsonage adequate time should be given to find different housing so as not to create undo stress on the family members.
- **Medical Insurance:** If major medical has been a part of the compensation package, this too will have to be replaced, this may not be able to happen quickly, especially if there are pre-existing conditions.
- **Financial Compensation:** There are no concrete formulas to determine financial compensation, some suggest that a pastor be given the equivalent of 2 weeks of pay for every year served but not less than 4 months. Finding the next call after a forced resignation will not likely happen quickly and the congregation needs to understand this part of the pastoral ministry context.
- **Timeline:** If there has been a moral or criminal failure, you can expect that your ministry may end immediately upon the revelation of such a circumstance. In a different circumstance, this can be negotiated. In some cases 30 days may appropriate, if the situation is stressful or difficult, the time might be shorter and a benefit to all who are involved.

Pastors who have experienced an involuntary resignation have sometimes reported difficulty in the days that follow. Depression, a sense of failure, lost passion for ministry, even a crisis of faith would not be uncommon experiences after the ending of a ministry. Time does not necessarily heal all wounds, but taking time at this point in ministry for recovery is highly encouraged. Even as much as a year away from the public office of ministry may be an opportunity to remember the reasons why you felt called to this work to begin with. Intentional work to process what exactly happened will only help to prepare you well for the next call.

All of this creates significant stress. Do not go through this time alone. Reach out to friends, other pastors who can encourage and listen, seek professional counseling, inform the Ministry Board and explore and make use of the resources available.

Hopefully before this chapter in your life closes, you will be able to come to reconciliation with those who have hurt you, and those you have hurt. Confession, forgiveness and healing are all very much a part of what Jesus intends for his people—including pastors!

**VIII. YOU ARE RETIRING**

As God has brought you through various transitions in your life and in your ministry, He will do the same during this new stage of your life. It’s important to develop a plan for your transition into retirement so that it can be done in a smooth and healthy way.
There are a number of strategies to consider as you proceed through this transition:

1. It is very important for you and your family to have developed a financial plan for retirement. Finding a financial consultant you trust will be of great help.

2. You may want to tell your congregation well in advance that you plan to retire, or you may give them only a few months. Consider the best timetable that would allow the congregation to have time to consider their options for pastoral leadership after your retirement. Once a date is set for retirement it’s important to follow through with that decision.

3. We also encourage you and other family members to discuss your options for where to live following retirement. It is generally expected the pastor will leave the church and community where he or she served. This is done to be closer to family or to have a clean break from the various ministries of the congregation. Doing so will give the new pastor time to bond with the members of the congregation and to deal in a healthy way with the change your retirement will cause.

4. Some retiring clergy will stay in the same church and community and want to remain active in the congregation. The relationship that you have with the new pastor is of the greatest importance. Much damage can be done with even the slightest hint of disagreement or frustration on your part with a new pastor. If you plan to remain, then be in regular communication with the new pastor, demonstrate your complete support of his/her ministry and remind people, who will inevitably contact you, you no longer have the office of Pastor and any concerns should be directed immediately to the new pastor and the leadership of the church. In this case it’s important that the new pastor knows that you will only be involved in the ministries of the church with his/her permission. Submission to the new pastor is absolutely the only course of action...even if you disagree. You retired. It is time for a new chapter.

5. Whether a pastor stays or leaves the community, it may be best not to worship or be involved in the life of the former congregation for a period of time, even up to a year or more. In fact, it is important, before you retire, to make it clear to the congregation that once you have retired you will not be available for weddings, funerals, baptisms, counseling, etc.

6. We recommend that you take some time to ask yourself some important questions like, “Who am I apart from my role as a pastor?” “What is my identity as a child of God?” “Is it ok for me not to be in control and in a leadership position?” ”How is my pastoral role connected to my self-worth?”

7. Nourish your relationships with your family members and friends. Explore some new hobbies. You may want to
consider doing Interim work or pulpit supply following your retirement or volunteering in your community. May you continue to use your God given talents in your various activities and sense God’s guiding hand as you enter into this important stage of your life.

IX. CERTIFICATION ISSUES

A. For those who are coming to the Certification Process as they complete their seminary education: Please refer also to the first section “Discerning the Call”, in this document. The essentials for certification for a seminarian are as follows:
1. Read on the LCMC website: under “Documents”, “Helpful Information,” “Churches and Clergy,” “Serving with LCMC.”
2. Contact the Ministry Board liaison for seminarians.
3. Find a pastor mentor to relate to during seminary.
4. If you are attending a non-Lutheran seminary check with the Coordinator for Pastoral Ministry concerning the necessary extra “Lutheran Work.”
5. Fulfill your internship expectation.
6. Contact the Coordinator for Pastoral Ministry in the last four or five months of your education to begin the Certification Process: A Certification Form and an Interview, review by the Ministry Board.
7. Assuming favorable completion of that you would be, “Certified as Available for Call and Ordination.”
8. Upon receiving and accepting a call – see sections I. and II. in this document.

B. LCMC often receives individuals who are already pastors in another church body.
1. The candidate makes an initial contact with the Coordinator for Pastoral Ministry to begin the process.
2. For those whose training, ordination and recent service were through another Lutheran church body, the Certification Process includes the Certification Form and Interview, review by the Ministry Board and Listing.
3. Those who are coming to LCMC whose training, ordination, and recent service were in a non-Lutheran church body will need to do some “Lutheran Work” as an initial part of the Certification Process. Contact the Coordinator for Pastoral Ministry for details and options.
4. Those who have been out of the ministry for some time will follow the process as mentioned in either C. 2 or C. 3 here. The additional caveat may be concerning issues surrounding their original exit from previous ministry, which would be discussed in the process.
5. All candidates for Certified Pastoral Ministry in LCMC could be “accepted,” “deferred,” or “denied.”
C. Reality:
The myth of Lutheran homogeneity is truly a myth. There are different organizational structures in the various Lutheran bodies as well as theological emphases that vary across the spectrum. Reflect on your own understanding of theology and ministry and whether LCMC would be a good fit for you.

D. Reading Lists
1. Thoroughly read what is on LCMC’s website. www.lcmc.net is our “headquarters.”
3. Read the rest of this document on transitions for clergy.
4. Read the “Documents” section on the website carefully, especially the “Call Packet”, “Transitions in Your Church: Change Happens”.
5. Consider Joining a District upon accepting an LCMC call.

E. As an association of congregations the deep work on whether a pastor should serve a particular, or any, congregation in LCMC is the province of the local congregation calling the individual.

F. Those who intend to have a specialized ministry (chaplaincy, etc.) are to be called and deployed to that ministry by a local LCMC congregation.