



A Season of Transition

PSD Ministry Resource for Pastoral Transition

Pastoral transitions are among the most significant changes for a congregation. They may be prompted by a joyful retirement or a painful separation. Whatever the reason, we know that “in all things God works for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.” (Rom 8:28) Pastoral transitions not only involve identifying and receiving a new spiritual leader, but considering the practices, culture, and future of the congregation. They are a tremendous opportunity to prayerfully discover what God has planned for your congregation in its next season of ministry.

Navigating this change in a hopeful and healthy way is essential. That means focusing on Christ and His work, not any human agenda. It also means finding pastoral helpers to partner with you in the process. These shepherds may join you for one weekend or an extended interim period. Below are a few options for pastoral care and coverage as you begin this transition. Be encouraged to schedule a visit with Pastor Jim Henkell, PSD Ministry Executive, at jim.henkell@psd-lcms.org to discuss these options and ask any questions.



A Time for Thanksgiving

Give thanks for the ministry of your pastor. Whatever the details, God has worked through your pastor to encourage your faith, forgive your sins, and bless you with the Word. We “give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thess 5:18) because God works redeems every situation for His purposes.

As you have opportunity, honor your pastor for his service among you. This may include a celebratory reception or meal, words of appreciation, prayer for his sending, and even a gift. (1 Tim 5:17)



A Time for Assurance

You a beautiful part of the body of Christ and He remains its Head no matter who serves as pastor. (Eph 4:11-16) While your congregation may be without a called pastor, it is not without a Shepherd who provides for and protects you through all things. (Jn 10:14-15)



A Time for Discernment

Ask God not only to bless your departing pastor but guide you to the next pastor(s) who will shepherd your congregation. This not only includes the next settled pastor, but those who may serve you during the transition. “If anyone lacks wisdom, you should ask God who give generously...” (James 1:5)

Pray together as a congregation and consider assembling a special prayer group or hosting special prayer gatherings. As you partner with other pastors, be aware of these types of service:



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Pulpit
Supply

Pulpit Supply – Involves scheduling various pastors to preach, lead worship, and offer Bible study. These pastors tend to serve the congregation just on Sundays (or Saturdays as needed). A list of pulpit supply pastors, as well as recommendations for honoraria, is provided on the District website and at this link: [PSD Pulpit Supply](#).

If you find yourselves without pastoral coverage for a particular Sunday, you might consider utilizing a sermon from another LCMS congregation (Please consult with them before projecting something from their website.) You may also access the repository of sermons from Lutheran Hour Ministries: <https://www.lhm.org/lutheranhour>. These include messages on many of the readings in the three-year lectionary. Please celebrate the Lord's Supper only when a pastor is present to officiate.



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Sample
Vacancy
Contract

Vacancy Pastorate – Means identifying a pastor to serve you each week as well as provide pastoral care (visits, counseling, etc.) and teach Bible study, catechism, or other courses. Most vacancies are part-time (20 hours per week or fewer) and many involve a retired pastor. Vacancy pastors are not called, but may be contracted by the congregation for a set timeline (often a six-month renewable term).

Vacancy pastors may be identified from among those offering pulpit supply or other area pastors of which the congregation is aware. The District may also offer suggestions as it becomes aware of available candidates. Occasionally, the vacancy pastor could be the called pastor of a neighboring LCMS congregation. Such an arrangement would need to be approved not only by the pastor, but by the congregation to which he is called.

Congregations should generate a position description for this role or detail their needs in a contract. Compensation can be any amount mutually agreed by both parties or could be a percentage of the full-time salary for that pastor and congregations. ([PSD Salary Guidelines](#)) and sample vacancy contract: https://www.psd-lcms.org/files/ugd/c3a216_a5a8f38fc1a641c0a78271c68140f652.pdf?index=true



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Salary
Guidelines

Interim Ministry – Includes calling a specially-trained, full-time pastor to serve the congregation for at least a year as it prepares for its next settled pastor. Interim pastors are trained to guide congregations to identify its unique ministry, process grief, resolve conflict, establish healthy governance, and more. Candidates for interim ministry are identified in partnership with the PSD Director of Transitional Interim Ministry and the District President. These pastors are called for a limited tenure and compensated (salary and benefits) according to the guidelines (see above). Additional housing and travel expenses may also be required. Learn more about interim ministry at <http://interimministrylcms.org>.

The PSD has developed a new interim ministry consultancy in which congregations may partner with a transitional interim pastor in a part-time capacity to accomplish specific goals regarding visioning, conflict resolution, etc. Contact Pastor Henkell about this option.

Call Process – If and when you are ready to find and call your next settled pastor, please contact Maddie Gong in the District President's office at maddie.gong@psd-lcms.org. She will assist you to begin the process and direct you to helpful resources for taking the next steps. President Gibson will also offer an orientation and provide guidance throughout the pastoral call process.