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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

You are on the edge of one of the most important decisions a congregation can make – the calling of a new pastor. The decision of calling a pastor is an important one because, like all people, pastors are unique. They have a unique configuration of spiritual gifts, personal abilities, experiences, and training that make them the individuals they are. Likewise, your congregation is unique. You are the assembled people of God in your particular community at this particular time. Ministries are also unique and often change over time.

As your District President through my representative (typically your Circuit Visitor), it is my goal to help make a match between your unique ministry and the pastor you call. While there is no question the Holy Spirit is intimately involved in leading you to the man God has set apart for service in your midst, it is important that all involved take on this decision with the utmost care and intentionality. God does indeed work through people, and He will work through you.

It is standard practice for a congregation to delegate responsibility for collecting information and articulating the congregation's needs to a call committee. This Self-Study document is intended to be drafted by such a committee. It is also my intent that this document then be shared with the voters of the congregation for comment and discussion. These conversations will help you to center in on the pastor you're seeking to be your spiritual leader. This document is divided up into sections dealing with the community in which your congregation is located, the congregation itself, your congregation's planning process, and your thoughts about the qualities you believe to be most important for your pastor. Please address each of these areas with care and concern as they will assist me in advising you and as they help you reach a healthy conclusion.

This packet comes with my prayer and the prayers of the Northwest District Staff for God's blessing and direction in the process. It is truly our intent to assist you under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to make a good match between you and your future pastor.

God bless you as you think and speak clearly, as you look where He is leading you, and as you join together as brothers and sisters to identify your future leader.

In Jesus,

Rev. Paul Linnemann  
Northwest District President

CONGREGATION SELF STUDY

Date Prepared: \_\_\_\_\_

I. **For The Record**

Name and Location of Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Circuit Visitor: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Vacancy/Intentional Interim Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date when pastoral vacancy/interim began: \_\_\_\_\_

Who is the "official contact person" in the congregation?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Other (FAX; Email): \_\_\_\_\_

Position held in the cong. \_\_\_\_\_

## II. Our Community

Demographic information about your community is obtained with the help of the Northwest District's Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) Department. They can connect you with a cost free resource available via the internet. Please call the LCEF staff and obtain a demographic report for your community; LCEF will help you interpret the results by meeting with your leadership. Please include the results with this self-study document. This information will help you complete 7-11 of the call document; however, it will also help you know your community better. Demographics are more than numbers; they translate into the lives of the people in your community thereby helping you connect with them.

After reviewing the demographic report...

...what surprised you?

...what expectations were affirmed?

What are the unique features/challenges in your community that are not addressed by the demographic data?

Is your community...

- growing
- declining
- stable
- changing Describe the change:

The people of our community can be best described as (check all that apply, \* the largest)...

- Retirees
- Empty nesters
- Families with school age children
- Families with very young children
- Single parent families
- Single adults

What are the businesses in your community that employ the most people?

What are the major occupations of your membership?

It is important for congregations to provide doorways into their ministry for those who aren't a part of it yet. What are the doorways into your congregation from the community?

What are our strength areas in relating to and serving our community?

What are our growth areas in relating to and serving our community?

In working with congregations, it has been the observation of the President's office that congregations tend to fall into three general categories: Thriving, Treading Water, or Legacy. Please review the descriptions of the categories below and consider which best applies to your situation. The purpose of these categories is not to label your ministry. In fact, it's really not important how anyone else, including the District Office staff, identify into which category you belong. The goal is for you to have this conversation among yourselves. Chances are you'll find yourself somewhere in between the three. Don't let that deter you from having a lively discussion about the state of your present ministry and how this moment in your congregation's history invites you to take a positive step.

### Thriving

These congregations are highly relational. They are engaged with their communities, providing multiple entry points by which people who aren't a part of the congregation can enter. They are characterized by strong lay leaders who take the initiative for ministry and work in partnership with the professional staff, holding one another mutually accountable. They are strategic – they have short term and long range plans by which they seek to fulfill the mission of the church. Their focus is on sharing the Gospel and connecting people to the life giving message of God's love in Jesus Christ.

### Treading Water

These congregations focus on the programs they offer. They rely heavily on their professional staff to initiate and drive these efforts. Congregations in this category may have a strong history of ministry in their community, but there is a growing anxiety that it is slipping away. This has led to tension and an uncomfortable uncertainty. They tend to operate in isolation of their communities and the congregations that are near to them. Life in these congregations isn't bad, but there is concern that it may be going in that direction.

### Legacy

These congregations are concerned about survival. They face a steadily declining membership and declining financial and people resources. They may be in a community that has undergone demographic changes since they began, and they are having a hard time adjusting to these changes. These congregations may not be able to afford a full time pastor. Their facilities might be in need of major repair or remodeling. The people feel like "it's only a matter of time" before they have to close.

Which category described above seems to best fit your situation?

How does this affect the calling of a pastor?

**III. Our Congregation**

	<u>Present</u>	<u>3 years ago</u>	<u>5 years ago</u>
Communicant membership:	_____	_____	_____
Baptized membership:	_____	_____	_____
Average Sunday worship service attendance:	_____	_____	_____
Sunday School enrollment:	_____	_____	_____
Average Sunday School attendance:	_____	_____	_____
Bible classes (combined average weekly attendance)			
Adult Bible classes:	_____	_____	_____
Youth Bible classes:	_____	_____	_____
Total congregational budget:	_____	_____	_____
Synod/District Mission offerings:	_____	_____	_____
Other mission projects	_____	_____	_____
Average per communicant giving for all purposes:	_____	_____	_____

How many people were brought into the congregation...

...during the past year?

\_\_\_\_\_ by adult confirmation or baptism; \_\_\_\_\_ by profession of faith; \_\_\_\_\_ by transfer.

...during the past three years?

\_\_\_\_\_ by adult confirmation or baptism; \_\_\_\_\_ by profession of faith; \_\_\_\_\_ by transfer.

How many people were removed from the congregation...

...during the past year?

\_\_\_\_\_ by removal; \_\_\_\_\_ by transfer; \_\_\_\_\_ by death.

...during the past three years?

\_\_\_\_\_ by removal; \_\_\_\_\_ by transfer; \_\_\_\_\_ by death.

Your average Sunday church attendance is \_\_\_\_% of your total baptized membership.

What percentage of the membership did not commune at least once during the past year? \_\_\_\_%

Attach a copy of your congregation's policy on the administration of Holy Communion. If there is no written policy or statement, please describe your congregation's practice.

How long did the previous pastor serve? \_\_\_\_\_

What has been the average length of ministry of the last 3 pastors? \_\_\_\_\_

Does your congregation use a hymnal?

If so, with which one is it most familiar?

Which one is most used?

Describe your congregation's worship style and practice. (If applicable, note your congregation's practice in regard to children's sermons, hymnals used, preferred musical styles, etc.)

How do you identify people in the congregation for leadership roles?

What regular ministry responsibilities are performed by the laypeople of the congregation?

Describe what your congregation believes the working relationship between the pastor and the laity should look like.

Does the congregation practice woman suffrage? \_\_\_\_\_

Which, if any, offices or committee memberships are held by women?

What regular ministry responsibilities are performed by women of the congregation?

If your congregation has more than one staff member, describe the organizational structure of the ministry team.

Who are the emeritus pastors in your congregation and in what way are they involved in the ministries?

What means do you have for caring for members of the church community?

How does your congregation partner with other congregations in ministry to your community?

Does your congregation have a School or Early Childhood Center?

If so, whom does it serve (check all that apply)

\_\_\_ Childcare ages: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Preschool grades: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Kindergarten

\_\_\_ Elementary School grades: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ High School

Are you part of a School Association?

If so, please list the other congregations in the Association:

Is the school operated under the church's budget?

How does the school staff participate in the congregation's administration and planning?

How are the school and its families involved in the life of the congregation?

How is the congregation involved in the life of the school?

#### **IV. Administration**

What is your congregation's process for planning ministry in the short term and long term future?

How does your congregation seek to identify and bring the Gospel to those not currently a part of the worshipping community?

What is your congregation's process for intentionally moving people toward a life of deepening discipleship?



Does your congregation have an existing and current written vision for the future and a corresponding action plan? If so, please attach it to this document.

Describe where the congregation is gaining momentum toward actualizing its vision.

What obstacles is the congregation facing in realizing its vision?

What type of Stewardship program do you use?

- Every Member Visit
- Cottage (group) meetings
- Personal interviews
- Commitments made during church service
- A variety of programs
- pledge campaign
- No specific program

What percent of your members make a regular financial pledge? \_\_\_\_%

Do your offerings for District/Synod work come from:

- A regular percent of total offerings
- A fixed budget amount
- Separate mission offering envelopes
- Mission festival or other special mission Sundays

Describe how you work with children, youth, and families.

Children:

Youth:

How many youth are involved (average)? \_\_\_\_\_

What percent of eligible youth is this? \_\_\_\_%

Is Bible study a regular part of the youth ministry? \_\_\_\_\_

Families:

What kind of administrative structure do you use?

(Voters' Assembly, Church Council, Lay Ministry Board, etc.)

How does your congregation evaluate its ministry? How often?

How does your congregation evaluate the staff's performance? How often?

Which of the following best describes the approach your congregation takes toward leadership, planning, and oversight of the congregational ministry? (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> constitution driven	<input type="checkbox"/> policy driven	<input type="checkbox"/> board driven
<input type="checkbox"/> staff driven	<input type="checkbox"/> pastor driven	<input type="checkbox"/> consensus/ collaborative
<input type="checkbox"/> leadership developed strategic plan	<input type="checkbox"/> influential family (ies)	

Summarize your thoughts about your congregation's planning and evaluation processes. As you do, consider what you believe you do well and areas in which you need to grow.

**V. If the Congregation is Part of a Multiple Parish**

How many miles between the congregations? \_\_\_\_\_

How many years has this been a multiple parish?

What is the plan for the future? Will this continue to be a multiple parish? For how long?

What parish activities are conducted on a joint basis?

Do you feel that more can be done jointly? \_\_\_\_\_ In what areas?

Is there an inter-parish council or committee that meets regularly? \_\_\_\_\_

Who represents the congregations on this group?

What are the strengths and weaknesses in the multiple parish arrangement?

On what basis are pastoral compensation and other financial matters handled?

## VI. Matching Congregational Needs to a Pastor

In considering the qualities, abilities, and interests listed below, which do you believe are the most important for your next pastor to possess? Please select your top ten and rank them.

### RATING CATEGORIES FOR THE PASTORS

**TACT:** Speaks and acts in a manner to maintain good relations with people, and works at not intentionally giving offense. Works to deepen good relations with all people, and loves people as redeemed souls in the blood of Jesus Christ. Is careful and sensitive in regard to what he says and does in order not to impede the proclamation of the true word of God.

**DISCIPLER:** Helps people to grow in their faith and to put that faith into practice in their personal relationships, through service to the church and their community, and through sharing the love of Christ with the people in their life.

**PATIENCE:** Bears the burdens of the ministry without complaining, gives people the benefit of the doubt and is a good model of putting the best construction on what people say and do. Is not hasty or impetuous in his actions and decisions. Exhibits the Scriptural virtue of “longsuffering.”

**COOPERATION:** Cooperates with the people as the Priesthood of Believers, seeks to work in concert with the leaders of the congregation. Is a team player, and makes a conscious effort to maintain a good working relationship with all the people of the parish, being particularly sensitive to local traditions, practices and concerns.

**INITIATIVE:** Works at being a good leader, is a self-starter and energetic and faithful in his work. Can be depended on to do his work well and without constant supervision.

**ADMINISTRATION:** Exhibits good leadership and management skills. Works well with boards and committees of the congregation so that the work of the church is faithfully carried out in an efficient, orderly, evangelical, and doctrinally sound way. Works at equipping people in the parish for their tasks and takes the time to properly inform and train them for their duties. Evangelically calls people responsible for various tasks to be accountable for those tasks. Maintains parish records in a responsible manner, and completes reports in good order and in a timely fashion. Supervises staff in an efficient, caring, and responsible manner.

**LEADERSHIP:** Keeps before the people of the congregation a vision of where they are to be going and what they are to be doing. Has a good understanding of the mission of the church and the priorities necessary to accomplish that mission. Encourages the support and participation of the people in the work to be done without being dictatorial.

**INNOVATION:** Being faithful to the Scripture, he brings ideas and advice to matters which the congregation is addressing, or needs to address. Will examine or try new ideas, methods or devices.

**CREATIVE:** Is imaginative, and able to effect a course of action or behavior with new techniques or approaches.

**PEOPLE SKILLS:** Successfully works hard at getting along with all people, has a pleasing personality, and is sensitive, pleasant, and empathetic. Is well regarded by his people and peers.

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** Is engaged with the community in ways that he is able to help and assist, and is visible and known in and by the community. Is sensitive and responsive to the needs of those outside the congregation.

**PERSONAL GROOMING:** Is clean and well appearing and dresses in a way that does not offend nor draw undue attention to himself. His appearance is consistent with his position, and does not reflect poorly on his congregation.

**OPENNESS TO CONTINUING EDUCATION:** Is willing to continue studying and learning in order to remain well informed and well trained in his Calling.

**CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION:** Is faithful in attending pastor's conferences, and takes an active role in such conferences, convocations, and the like.

**COMPUTER/TECHNOLOGY LITERATE:** Is familiar with computers/technology and able to use them competently in his work and in service to his congregation.

**CHILDREN'S MINISTRY:** Relates well to children, and communicates successfully with them. Has a high regard for the Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and other children's ministries in the congregation.

**YOUTH MINISTRY:** Has an interest in and skill for working with young people. Understands that young people are also the church and works to equip them with God's word, saving faith, and the ability to live the Christian life. Is patient with youth, and understands the special challenges that they face.

**YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY:** Works well with this age group (18 – 30), and is sensitive to their special perspective on things and the needs in their lives.

**SINGLES MINISTRY:** Is comfortable and able to work with single adults and is sensitive to their special challenges and circumstances in the world. He understands that they do not at times fit into social structure that caters to couples and families.

**OLDER ADULT MINISTRY:** Has an interest in and skill for working with older adults. Is sensitive to their needs, willing to listen to their concerns, and gentle and patient with them in their weaknesses. Is faithful and conscientious in providing Word and Sacrament ministry to the shut-ins.

**FAMILY MINISTRY:** Is sensitive to the needs of families, is helpful in bringing Biblical truth to bear on such issues as parenting, discipline in the family, and special issues arising in single parent families. Models care and nurture for his own family.

**MINISTRY TO INACTIVES:** Is concerned about members who are not active in the parish, visits in their homes, and works at bringing the back into the active life and service of the congregation.

**SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES:** Works well with small groups, such as Bible study groups, peer groups, special interest groups, and the like. He understands small group dynamics, and can identify and train small group leaders.

**ASSIMILATION OF NEW MEMBERS:** Is good at nurturing new members and helping them feel at home in the congregation. He assists the new members in becoming active and contributing members of the parish. He is sensitive to the special needs of people who are new to a congregation.

**LAY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:** Is capable of identifying people with good leadership qualities and then training and encouraging these people to assume leadership roles in the parish. Works at equipping people to carry out duties and responsibilities in the congregation.

**PERSONAL WITNESSING:** Has a genuine concern for the lost, and conveys that concern to the people of the parish. Makes evangelism calls and encourages and trains the congregation to do the same. Maintains his personal life so that he is an example of good witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**COUNSELING:** Open and assessable as a pastoral counselor to God's people with God's word, but clearly understands his limits in terms of needs outside of the spiritual realm. Knows when he can help, and when he should refer to others. Carefully keeps all information in regard to counseling confidential. Is a good listener, is not judgmental, and uses God's word appropriately.

**PREACHING CONTENT:** Understands that preaching is more than a presentation of Biblical narrative and Confessional soundness, but must communicate and proclaim Law and Gospel. Knows that preaching which edifies is presenting Law and Gospel in such a way that even a child can understand it. Makes the Gospel prominent in preaching, but preaches the whole word of God with faithfulness. Makes clear application of the word of God to lives of the people of the congregation. Is faithful to the Scripture and Confessions in his sermons.

**PREACHING DELIVERY:** Preaches in a manner that makes the sermon interesting and understandable. Preaches with confidence and with a passion for the word of God and for the people that God has placed in his care. Preaches in an engaging manner using good communication skills, and makes good use of illustrations.

**TEACHING ABILITY:** Understands that teaching is more than lecturing, and uses methods appropriate to his hearers, whether children or adults. Works to present material so that people grow in knowledge, attitude, and skill in regard to the Christian faith and life. Works to train teachers in the parish so that others in Sunday School classes or Bible classes may assist him in his work of teaching God's word in the congregation.

**WORSHIP:** Understands the nature of worship and leads the congregation in worship on a regular basis, and in appropriate manner and form. Carefully prepares for each worship service, and leads the congregation in understanding that in true Christian worship, God is present in His Word and Sacraments and through these means of grace is delivering to His people the gifts that He has for them in Jesus Christ. He teaches and encourages the people to attend the worship services in God's House faithfully, and works hard to make each service Spiritually rich and nourishing.

**STEWARDSHIP:** Teaches God's people the Biblical principles of Christian stewardship, and models that in his own life. Works to help the people understand and practice what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

**VISITING:** Understands that personal contact with members of the congregation and prospective members is very important. Makes visits to the homes of the people of the congregation, and also maintains a posture of availability to members who want to come and visit with him. Reaches out to people and is assessable to all, and is sensitive to the needs of the sick and shut-in. Gives high priority to individual soul care.

**VII. Pastor's Compensation**

Do you use the salary guidelines provided by the District? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your pastor's salary : above; \_\_\_\_\_below; or \_\_\_\_\_ equal to the guidelines figure?

Is the pastor's salary regularly reviewed? \_\_\_\_\_ By whom? \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of car allowance: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you furnish: Parsonage \_\_\_\_\_  
Utilities \_\_\_\_\_  
Housing allowance \_\_\_\_\_ (amount? \_\_\_\_\_)  
Housing equity allowance \_\_\_\_\_ (amount? \_\_\_\_\_)  
The Church's Plan \_\_\_\_\_  
Concordia Health Plan \_\_\_\_\_ which level? \_\_\_\_\_  
are dependants covered? \_\_\_\_\_ worker's contribution? \_\_\_\_\_  
Disability and Survivor Plan \_\_\_\_\_  
Retirement and Survivor Plan \_\_\_\_\_ congregational match? \_\_\_\_\_  
Allowance for Cont. Ed. \_\_\_\_\_ (amount? \_\_\_\_\_)  
Pastoral Conference Expenses \_\_\_\_\_

If a parsonage is furnished:

How many bedrooms? \_\_\_\_\_. Are any appliances furnished? \_\_\_\_\_

What size family can the parsonage comfortably accommodate? \_\_\_\_\_.

What are the arrangements for day(s) off and vacation?

Is the study/office provided in the church, or in the parsonage?

What technology tools are provided for the worker?

What secretarial help does the congregation provide?

Does the congregation provide for a sabbatical? If so, what is the process?

God bless your consideration of your ministry and your search for a pastor to lead you into the future.