

**Interview Helps & Sample Questions**

**Interview Helps**

A good interview requires that members of the Call Committee be good listeners. The dictionary definition of “listen” is “to make an effort to hear something; to pay attention; to heed.” Hearing answers to your questions will take a little effort.

You will listen better if you take a real interest in the candidate. If you receive more than one name to consider, do not make any decisions regarding a candidate’s viability until after all the interviews have been conducted.

Allow a sufficient amount of time for a candidate to fully answer the questions.

Some of the candidate’s answers will pique your curiosity and lead to follow-up questions. Your probing with these additional questions will indicate to the candidate that you are indeed interested and listening.

Be sure to ask for clarification on anything that you do not understand. Do not be afraid to ask for further explanation. Someone else is no doubt wondering the same thing.

Listen for what is behind the words. Are you able to discern some major themes of this person’s ministry? What does this candidate’s demeanor say to you?

Make an effort to ask open-ended questions rather than asking questions that may only need a yes or no response. It is surprising how different the answers will be if you ask open-ended questions. You are provided with a lot of basic information about the candidates in their Rostered Minister Profile. Read that thoroughly in preparation for preparing your questions for interviewing.

Use your time together to really learn about the candidate. Ask the candidate to describe the areas of ministry that bring joy. Ask what the candidate enjoys doing with free time. Ask the candidate to describe his/her personal devotional life.

In advance of any interview, prepare ten to twelve questions you wish to ask each candidate. Write questions that are appropriate to your congregation. It is highly recommended that the Call Committee meet privately to review the interview procedure and the questions before the interview.

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**Sample Questions**

The following questions were prepared some years ago by the staff of the Pacifica Synod. This list is not comprehensive and should simply be used to stimulate thought as you formulate your own questions and as you consider the areas of ministry you would like your pastor to give focus to as he/she begins ministry in your congregation.

**Preaching/Worship Leadership**

* Describe how you go about preparing for the worship service on Sunday morning.
* Think back in your ministry and tell us about the most difficult sermon you ever preached.
* Share some of your thoughts about the worship life of a congregation.

**Social Ministry**

* Tell us how you evaluate community needs and community strengths.
* Describe how you have contributed to the quality of life in your community.
* Describe how you go about motivating members of your congregation to respond to community needs.

**Administration**

* Describe the steps you normally take when working with groups to achieve consensus or cohesiveness.
* How would you describe your style of leadership in overseeing the work of the congregation?
* Tell us about a period in your life when you had to manage multiple demands in your work and how you determined priorities.

**Christian Education/Teaching**

* How do you evaluate the faith development of others?
* Describe your approach to helping adults to grow in their faith.
* Describe your approach to teaching children and young people about the Christian faith.

**Stewardship**

* Describe how you have helped others grow in their personal stewardship.
* In what ways have you helped members understand the management of their money and their responsibilities as Christian stewards?
* Describe the development of your personal sense of Christian stewardship.

**Evangelism/Mission**

* Describe the ways in which you typically become acquainted and associate with unchurched people in your community.
* What kind of guidance and training do you provide members of your congregation with for reaching unchurched people in the community?
* Describe how you have achieved a multicultural approach to your ministry.

**Interpersonal Climate**

* What steps do you take in helping others feel secure, trusted, and open with you?
* When pressure mounts, how do you maintain your cool in ministry?

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* Describe an experience where conflict arose between yourself and another person and how resolution was finally achieved.

**Ministry in Crisis**

* Describe your style of ministry to people in times of crisis.
* Describe how you have used the establishment of boundaries to strengthen your ministry.
* How do you assess your own professional limitations when ministering to persons in crisis?

**Interpret Theology**

* Describe the ways in which you communicate the faith.
* Describe your skills as a teacher and preacher.
* What resources do you use to remain theologically and biblically fresh and current?

**Innovation/Creativity**

* Describe your approach to introducing new ideas in the congregation.
* Describe your current vision for ministry and how you would help others in the congregation to capture that vision.
* Think back in your ministry and describe a situation that was stagnant or failing and describe how you stepped in to revitalize it.

**Participant in the Larger Church**

* Describe how you have guided your congregation's members into understanding their relationship to the greater church.
* Describe your participation in the work of the church beyond the congregation, including ecumenical relationships, church agencies and institutions.
* Describe what your congregation believes to be its role as a congregation of the ELCA.

**Self-Care/Family Life/Personal Growth**

* Describe some of your most important accomplishments and how you went about reaching those goals.
* How do you work at making yourself more effective in your work?
* Briefly describe ways in which you care for yourself physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

**Your Call to Ministry**

* Briefly describe the events that led you to prepare for the ministry.
* Describe the process of deliberation that helps you determine God's call.
* In what ways has your call to ministry changed over the years?

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**Questions a Candidate May Ask**

You need to allow time for a candidate to ask questions. Be prepared to address the candidate's concerns by considering the following questions.

* Describe the mission of your congregation.
* What do you think individuals like about this congregation?
* What are some of the things you hope this congregation will do in the future that would benefit you? Others?
* What is the role of staff and what is the role of the laity in your congregation?
* How many people are involved in leadership roles? How are lay people involved in worship?
* In your opinion, how are decisions made in your congregation?
* How do you welcome and assimilate new members?
* What is the congregation's commitment to, support of, and partnership with the synod and the ELCA?
* What would you display on a highway billboard regarding your congregation?
* Why did the previous pastor leave?
* Are there skeletons in the closet that I should know about in considering the call here?
* In what area(s) of social concern has the congregation been active?
* What are some of the reasons that you are members of this congregation and not some other one?
* What expectations do you have of the functions of a pastor, both in terms of importance and number of hours worked? What gets deferred if time runs out?
* What view does the congregation have about continuing education? What about time off and financial support for it? Will the pastor be encouraged to attend the annual Professional Leaders' Conference? Does the congregation pay the expense for it?
* How does the pastor's family receive support? Are there expectations of the pastor's family? 
* Administratively, who prepares the council and congregational meeting agendas? Who chairs the meetings?
* Is there a parsonage? If not, what are the housing opportunities in the area? What present financial arrangements have been made for the pastor's housing? Has the council and/or congregation envisioned any future ideas for the pastor's housing (shared equity, mortgage loan from the congregation, etc.)?
* What is the school situation in this area?
* What arrangements have you made for moving the pastor, family, and their household goods into this area? Will the pastor be permitted to use a commercial mover?

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