

**A Review of the Call Process of the Lutheran Church of Australia[[1]](#footnote-1)\***

A report commissioned by and prepared for General Church Council, Lutheran Church of Australia

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Contents

[Recommendations 4](#_Toc520119177)

[a. Recommendation regarding the Call Process of the LCA as a whole 4](#_Toc520119178)

[b. Recommendations that address the effectiveness or efficiency of the Call Process 5](#_Toc520119179)

[Introduction 9](#_Toc520119180)

[The story behind the resolution: St Peter’s Lutheran Church, Hobart 9](#_Toc520119181)

[Aims and Methodology 10](#_Toc520119182)

[1 Background 12](#_Toc520119183)

[1.1 The Current LCA Call Process 12](#_Toc520119184)

[1.2 The history of the current LCA Call Process 16](#_Toc520119185)

[1.3 Call Processes currently in use in other Churches 16](#_Toc520119186)

[2 Results of the Survey on the LCA Call Process 19](#_Toc520119187)

[Introduction 19](#_Toc520119188)

[Response to the Survey 19](#_Toc520119189)

[Section 2: LCA Call Process 23](#_Toc520119190)

[Timing 30](#_Toc520119191)

[Transparency 31](#_Toc520119192)

[Care for the Pastor, care for the Parish 35](#_Toc520119193)

[Section 3: Models of the Call Process 37](#_Toc520119194)

[Alternative Call Process 38](#_Toc520119195)

[Section 4: Retraining, Reskilling and Review of Pastors 41](#_Toc520119196)

[Summary 48](#_Toc520119197)

[3 Results of the Interviews with Administrators of the LCA Call Process 49](#_Toc520119198)

[Introduction 49](#_Toc520119199)

[Interview responses 49](#_Toc520119200)

[Section 1 View of authority/duty of care and of the Call Process 49](#_Toc520119201)

[Section 2 Administering the Call Process 50](#_Toc520119202)

[Section 3 The Call Process 50](#_Toc520119203)

[Section 4 Other factors 51](#_Toc520119204)

[Conclusions 53](#_Toc520119205)

[4 Conclusions 54](#_Toc520119206)

[General conclusions 54](#_Toc520119207)

[Implications 56](#_Toc520119208)

[Potential further studies 56](#_Toc520119209)

[Appendix 1: Survey questions and instructions 58](#_Toc520119210)

[Appendix 2: Interview questions and instructions 74](#_Toc520119211)

# Recommendations

When considering the following recommendations, it should be noted that careful distinction is made between recommendations that address the effectiveness or efficiency of the Call Process itself and recommendations that address factors that impact or stress the Call Process.

Distinction is also made between recommendations that affect the theology of the LCA and those that affect its practice. It is the conclusion of the researchers that none of the recommendations that follow affect the theology of the LCA. The results of the study do not call for substantive change to the Call Process. By substantive is meant major structural changes. Minor changes can and do need to be made to improve its efficiency (Recommendations b.1-4). The impact of each recommendation, even when the training, supply or mobility of pastors is concerned, is restricted to LCA practice.

## a. Recommendation regarding the Call Process of the LCA as a whole

**1. That no major structural change be made to the Call Process**

**Rationale**: A slight majority of congregations who responded to the survey agreed that the Call Process is inadequate and can be improved. 47% of those who responded agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the overall Process. Of the 11 bishops and Directors of Mission interviewed opinions of the Process ranged from ‘it works well’ to okay to ‘it feels cumbersome’. Some thought that it could use renovation. On drilling down, however, it became clear that it was less the Process that was at fault than the factors (supply of pastors and lack of pastors with the right skill sets) that are impacting it. Generally there was high respect for the Process, with the majority of bishops believing that the Holy Spirit is the prime mover of the process, that it involves human mechanisms that the Holy Spirit works through, and that those mechanisms can be altered. The majority of congregations surveyed agreed with the second of these propositions, that it is a largely human mechanism that the Holy Spirit works through. On consideration of the survey results, and of the impact factors identified by administrators of the Process, indications are that key frustrations with the Call Process (around transparency and timeliness) can be addressed without substantive change to the current Process. Impact factors (the supply of pastors and pastors with the right skill sets for certain parish types and school ministry) do not pertain to the Call Process itself and need to be addressed separately.

**Benefits**: The Call Process is preserved as a Spirit-led process that is distinct from current workplace employment practices. Emphasis is placed on impact or stress factors and the urgency of addressing them. No accidental flow-on effects are introduced that may adversely affect or lead to a secularisation of the Process in the future. There is no change to the status of pastors that may have tax law implications.

**Risks**: That if the reasons for this are not explained clearly, lay people may see this as avoidance of addressing perceived problems.

**2. That the Call Process of the LCA be reviewed in 2028 and the results reported to General Convention of Synod**

**Rationale**: The effectiveness of the Call Process is important to the wellbeing of the LCA. The Process is about to be subjected to significant stress over the next 10 years. It is important that implementation of the recommendations and their effectiveness be monitored.

**Benefits**: Accountability to General Convention of Synod.

## b. Recommendations that address the effectiveness or efficiency of the Call Process

It should be noted that Recommendations b.1-2.1 and b.3-4.1 have been discussed with the Joint Working group on the Call of Pastors Process in HRS (LAMP2) and have been deemed implementable. b.4.2 is as yet untested and may prove unfeasible. b.2.2 has not been discussed with the Joint Working Group, but is feasible and simple to implement.

**1. Replacement of pastor self-assessments/profiles in LAMP with training records compiled from a compulsory annual review of parish pastors**

**Proposal**: That a compulsory review of each pastor on the LCA Roll of Pastors active in parish ministry be conducted on an annual basis. That the review be directed towards professional development of the pastor on the basis of mutual ministry goals agreed upon between pastor and parish. That a record be entered in LAMP of all PD training that a pastor undertakes after ordination, along with prior qualifications. That the record be supplied to parishes on request as part of the Call Process. That the review process be supervised by Church Worker Support/HRS.

**Rationale**: There is a high level of mistrust and dissatisfaction with the current pastor self-assessment/profile, which forms a core element in the Call Process. Parishes seek accurate information on pastors. Certain ministries (school and multi-staff) require more than the general skill set. School chaplains already undergo annual review as part of the staff requirements of the school system.

**Benefits**: The LCA has attempted to introduce review processes in the past. The introduction of non-mandatory reviews at 2-yearly or greater intervals has been ineffective. Section 4 of the Survey provides data concerning this issue. By linking the review process with the Call Process it adds weight and incentive. Making the review compulsory adds to its effectiveness and calls on parishes and pastors to be more accountable. Responsibility for reporting is taken out of the hands of pastors.

**Risks**: Changing the culture of the church may prove difficult and require considerable education of pastors and parishes. Conducting the reviews and maintaining records will be burdensome. There are currently 221 general and specific ministry pastors serving parishes, plus a further 22 working in aboriginal ministries. This is a large number of reviews to rotate through. There will need to be discussion with HRS as to who conducts the review in each District. Bishops and Directors of Mission are already overburdened. Equity issues will also need to be considered. If parish pastors are subjected to compulsory annual review, and school chaplains already undergo compulsory annual review, should the active pastors in all other ministries (episcopal, reconciliation, media and mission roles, aged care chaplaincy, ALC faculty, etc) be subjected to compulsory annual review also? If so, this pushes the number of pastors requiring review annually to around 300. This number could be mitigated to a small degree in that the Principal of ALC is subjected to regular review as a University of Divinity requirement, and annual review of ordained ALC faculty by the Academic Dean could become part of their job requirement. It may be possible to find similar natural mechanisms in other cases.

**2. Clear communication to everyone involved in the Call Process (those who administer it, pastors, congregations/parishes) of the steps of the Call Process, including all available variations**

**2.1 Production of a training video that outlines the Call Process, available via LAMP to every parish the moment a Call is declared vacant**

**Proposal**: That a YouTube-style video adaptable for all media forms be produced with three parts. The first explains in a simple and engaging way why the LCA uses the process that it does (God is at the centre; the Lutheran church is a synodical church, so the congregation and its needs are at the centre; serving as a pastor is not a job; the Holy Spirit is at work in the process, so it doesn’t work like the business world; prayer is important in the process, you get the pastor that you pray for, etc). The second part explains all of the options available within the Process and why and in what circumstances some might work better than others. For instance, that while calling for expressions of interest is available, given the current shortage of pastors this is likely to produce only a small number of responses. Not all of these may prove suitable. Expressions of interest may, however, given the current shortage of pastors with specialised skill sets be the best option for school or multi-staff ministries. The third part explains how the process works administratively in that particular District, that is, what the congregation needs to do in preparation and what it can expect to happen and in what order.

**Rationale**: In many cases the Call Committee is largely inexperienced. In some cases, a parish hasn’t gone through a Call for a very long time. In others, the people who served on the last Call Committee are no longer available. Bishops and Directors of Mission report that a considerable amount of time can be taken just to explain why and how the Call Process is different from what lay people are used to in their own professions. At the same time, very few parishes or even administrators of the Process are aware of all of the options available within the Call Process. For instance, many parishes are unaware that the Call Process can begin the moment their current pastor has accepted a new Call, even though he has not yet left the parish. Every moment counts under circumstances in which a shortage of pastors is extending the length of time it takes to successfully call a pastor.

**Benefits**: Expectation management. The first part of the video can be played to the entire congregation. The other two parts can be reviewed multiple times by the members of the Call Committee in private on their own devices. An instructional video ensures that everyone has the same information and is aware of all of the options available and why some of them may not be useful in their particular situation. It helps to manage expectations. The same video could be of benefit to new bishops and Directors of Mission, who are themselves learning how to administer the Call Process. A digital information approach may encourage younger people to volunteer for the Call Committee and engage in the Call Process.

**Risks**: That production of the video/s is not enacted and implemented rapidly. That Districts do not work with the division that produces the videos to keep their customised Part Three updated. If the video is in three separate parts, that parishes skip Part One, which is the most essential in that it puts the parish in the required frame and manages expectations. That the video for each District is not clearly identified and a parish downloads the wrong video for their District.

**2.2 Production of an FAQ in LAMP**

**Proposal**: That a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) be produced and made available in LAMP as a first or early encounter by Call Committees of the Process.

**Rationale**: In addition to the reasons listed in the Rationale to 2.1 above, FAQs allow people to find out information that they would otherwise need to ask an administrator of the system. It allows administrators of the system to set out clear rules. E.g. ‘Can we start the Call Process as soon as our pastor has accepted a Call to another parish?’ ‘Yes’. ‘Do we have to wait for our pastor to vacate the parish before we can start the Call Process?’ ‘No. You can start as soon as your pastor has publicly announced that he has accepted a Call.’ ‘We need a pastor with a special set of skills. Can we call for expressions of interest?’ ‘Yes and no. Yes, this might be a good option for your parish, and yes, you can use the expression of interest process, but you are not allowed to send out an expression of interest yourselves. It is your District bishop or his delegate who will send it out to the pastors. You can’t do it directly.’ etc.

**Benefits**: Fully-informed Call Committees and fully-informed administrators of the Process. Consistency and clarity of information. Administrators can refer Call Committees to the FAQ. Normalisation of the Process across all Districts.

**Risks**: That the FAQs are not accurate or not kept up-to-date, if the Process is varied or adjusted. That the FAQs put pressure on Districts to make their Processes consistent.

**3. That signed Call Documents be scanned and emailed to the called Pastor and that the 4-week period allowed for consideration of the Call start from the moment the pastor indicates receipt of the email.**

**Proposal**: That the hard copy still be sent by Australia Post, as required, but that sending a digital copy as soon as possible following the Call meeting become a matter of policy.

**Rationale**: Parishes are frustrated by perceived delays in the Process, especially when the pastor to whom a Call has been issued declines and they are obliged to re-enter the Call Process. Some parishes and some bishops believe that the 4-week period granted for discernment of the Call, in cases where pastors know because of mobility factors that they will decline the Call, encourages pastors to use the full period allowed before declining. After listening to arguments on both sides, there are both benefits and risks in shortening the discernment period. Suggestions were to shorten the discernment period to 3 or even 2 weeks, with the pastor allowed to apply to the bishop for extension in cases of genuine discernment. What is clear is that the Holy Spirit needs to be allowed to work within the pastor in receipt of the Call regardless. Australia Post now takes on average a week to deliver mail, which is extending the waiting period on the part of the parish. Rather than compromise the work of the Holy Spirit, it seems better to reduce delivery time of the documents using digital means. Pastors should be expected to deliver their response to the Call in the same manner.

**Benefits**: Shortening the delays currently experienced by parishes when waiting for pastors to respond to a Call. Emailing scanned documents has become normative and this practice meets current expectations.

**Risks**: There are still some parishes that have difficulty accessing internet and that may need to mail the Documents and receive a response in the same manner.

**4. Improving the data concerning pastors in LAMP**

**4.1 Filtering the Available for Call status of pastors within LAMP**

**Proposal**: That HRS/Church Worker Support work with CoB and the Directors of Mission to produce a grading system in LAMP that preserves the confidentiality of the private information of pastors, but provides sufficient information for Call Committees to filter out pastors from the Available for Call list who are unlikely to accept a Call to their particular parish. One possibility is a grading system that indicates simply: Available for Call (no restrictions); Available for Call with geographic restrictions; etc, with confidential annotations accessible only to bishops or District officers. Upon application, the bishop or Call Committee can then skim down the list and eliminate all pastors whose constraints indicate that they are not available to move to the area in which the parish is situated.

**Rationale**: LAMP currently categorises pastors on an Available for Call/Not Available for Call status only. Pastors who have fulfilled the minimum number of years in a parish (3 for GMPs, 4 for GPs) are automatically re-categorised as Available for Call. All SMPs are accorded Not Available for Call status. Parishes are deeply frustrated that on being declared Vacant they are issued an extensive list of pastors Available for Call. This creates unrealistic expectations. Many of those pastors are unlikely to entertain a Call from their particular parish for a variety of reasons. At present there is no way of filtering the Available for Call list in LAMP so that the Call Committee of a parish can arrive at a working list with a reasonable possibility of resulting in a successful outcome. The result has been considerable time consumed by lay people on parish Call Committees (and also the Vic/Tas District Call Committee) phoning pastors to ask whether they would (or, in the case of the Vic/Tas Committee, if there is a reason why they would not) consider a new Call. There is, anecdotally, considerable frustration, if for the most part good will, at the other end on the part of pastors. While there is some argument that even if pastors have no intention of considering a Call the Holy Spirit can still be at work in them causing them to risk something they might not otherwise have considered, it is also important that the church acknowledge that there has been considerable cultural change in the past 20-30 years and that pastors are less mobile for a variety of reasons. Without betraying confidentiality, it should be possible to provide some simple grading of pastors within LAMP that alerts Call Committees to the fact that a pastor may not be fully mobile. In some cases it may be that the pastor has a child with special needs or has their own medical concerns and so needs to be within commuting distance of the appropriate therapy. In some cases the pastor’s spouse has a career that restricts mobility geographically. Making this information available to Call Committees in general terms, without providing information about specifics, would help to prevent the parish issuing and the pastor receiving unfruitful Calls. Other pastors are simply working hard in their current Call and growing the leadership in that parish to ensure its future. At present the burden of this knowledge rests with the bishops and Directors of Mission who are obliged to work with parishes to filter the list during the pre-Call process. Parishes feel left out of the filtering process and that they are being asked to accept the bishop’s advice on blind trust.

**Benefits**: Creation of a more realistic list of pastors for Call Committees to work with. Reduction of issuing and receiving phone calls for both Call Committees and pastors. Reduction of the number of unproductive Calls at a time when the length of vacancies is increasing due to an increasing shortage in the supply of pastors. Reduction of the workload of bishops and Directors of Mission. Improved transparency. Reduction of parish/lay mistrust of bishops and pastors.

**Risks**: That this could be considered to compromise the Call to Ministry of a pastor and be incompatible with the theology of the pastoral office current in the LCA. Confidentiality concerning the private lives of pastors could be compromised.

**4.2 Provision to Call Committees of information concerning the Leave entitlements accrued by pastors whose names will be presented to a Call Meeting**

**Proposal**: That HRS/Church Worker Support assess whether there is a secure means of providing to Call Committees via LAMP data concerning the Leave entitlements accrued by the pastors whose names will be presented to a Call Meeting.

**Rationale**: Parishes express frustration with the current lack of transparency concerning how much Leave (annual and Long Service/Recreation) a pastor will have accrued at the time that he commences a Call, if a Call is issued and accepted (see Section 2 Table 32). Parishes respect and understand that pastors are due and require leave. After what is often a long vacancy, they find it frustrating when a pastor arrives and in the first 12 months takes more than the usual annual leave. If there was some way in which this information could be confidentially communicated to them in advance, it would help them to be prepared.

**Benefits**: Greater transparency. Better preparation on the part of the congregation/parish for the pastor being absent for longer than expected periods during the initial phase of settling in.

**Risks**: Confidentiality concerning the private lives of pastors could be compromised.

# Introduction

## The story behind the resolution: St Peter’s Lutheran Church, Hobart

St Peter’s is the only Lutheran congregation in Hobart – in fact in all of Southern Tasmania. And it is one of only 4 Lutheran Congregations in Tasmania. Consequently, it is a congregation constantly in mission, on its own, and it can be seen as a tough gig. The Congregation understands that.

Tasmania is an island and you can’t just jump into your car and drive to visit family in the next state. The Congregation understands that – although it is only a one hour plane flight to Melbourne.

Most LCA pastors do not have any family in Hobart, let alone Tasmania, and so can feel isolated and miss the support of close family members. The Congregation understands that too – especially those members who left their whole life and family on the other side of the world to flee to safety in Australia.

And it was these post WWII migrants who wrote letters and lobbied and begged for a Lutheran pastor to visit to baptise their babies, and for help to eventually establish their own Congregation – St Peter’s, Hobart.

So the Congregation works very hard each time there is a vacancy to provide as much information as possible to potential pastors, to be as clear as possible about the challenges (and the rewards) of this location, and offer as much support as possible. After all, it is the strong team effort from all in the Congregation (with God’s help and guidance) that keeps the Congregation intact during vacancies.

And so each time the Congregation participated in the call process it started out with such hope, but always seemed to end in frustration and despondency. It was following one particularly frustrating series of events, where the Congregation had been through the call process a couple of times in a relatively short period of time with no success, that the idea of making a proposal to Synod for the review of the whole process was born. These events went like this:

* Before being able to look at which pastors were available for a call the Congregational leaders undertook significant preparation involving surveys, phone hook-ups, Congregational meetings, and the development of future plans for the Congregation.
* Then, of the many pastors who were on the list, most were unknown to the Call Committee and the Congregational members as the opportunity to meet wider Church members is limited. Further information from District leaders and others was sought.
* Finally the Call Committee got to choose about 4 or 5 pastors who it thought would be appropriate for the Congregation. However, the majority of these said they were not interested, and from their responses it was clear that they were never really a realistic option. Our isolation means we are dependent on mainland advice, but the information relied upon was not as transparent as it could be.
* But then a couple of pastors actually came down to look at the situation in Hobart. Much excitement. However, the Committee was told a few weeks later that while it all looked very good the pastors felt they had more work to do in their own Congregations. Again much work, and expense, for no result.
* The final straw came when one pastor accepted another call less than 12 months later. It appeared that the reason for declining Hobart’s call was not the whole story. The Congregation was shattered, and it was clear that the existing process was not working as intended and needed to be examined.

We are sure that St Peter’s experience is not unique in the LCA, and a shortage of pastors exacerbates the situation, but we look forward to the outcome of this review. We look forward to a revised process that supports rather than frustrates, that is timely, open and realistic. And while we have a pastor we enjoy working with God in His mission with the support of that pastor and the LCA.

This is the story of St Peter’s experience of the LCA Call Process. It explains why they were prompted to move the resolution that initiated this project. We asked them to share that experience because it illustrates some of its findings. Their story is shared across the LCA by other parishes. As this report shows, three types of parish are currently difficult to supply: remote parishes, multi-staff parishes, and school ministries (school chaplaincies and parishes associated with schools). In this respect, in seeking to fill a new Call the parish that initiated Resolution 151209, St Peter’s, Hobart, represents ‘the perfect storm’.

## Aims and Methodology

This study was commissioned by General Church Council (GCC) and undertaken by Australian Lutheran College (ALC), Adelaide. The lead investigator was Prof. Wendy Mayer, Associate Dean for Research, assisted by Dr Valerie Kupke, Pam Zweck-Silcock, and Leanne Daymond. The report on the Survey results was prepared by Dr Kupke, the report on Interview results, Supply of Pastors, and Executive Summary by Prof. Mayer.

The study was initiated by Resolution 151209 of the 2015 LCA General Convention of Synod:

RESOLVED that the General Convention support the conduct of a review of the LCA call process which will:

1. Identify and examine potential new models for filling pastoral vacancies in congregations with a view to increasing efficiency, transparency and inclusion; and
2. Include facilitated conversations with congregations as part of the research process

Outcome: a detailed report of the findings to be delivered to GCC and CoB, which includes recommendations that can be taken by GCC to the 2018 General Convention of Synod.

The aims of the study were threefold. First, to assess the current Call Process in relation to other available or potentially new models. Second, to solicit the opinions and experiences of congregations. Third, to make recommendations based on the results of the research. It should be noted that the resolution did not ask the researchers to investigate the Call Process in regard to schools or other chaplaincies. While some adjunct research was done in this area it is not included in this report. Recommendation c.2 includes schools in its implications.

The study was split into three parts.

1. Assessment of Call Process models in other comparable Lutheran churches around the world and in other denominations in Australia.
2. A national on line survey of congregations (conducted between 30 November 2017 and 19 February 2018).
3. In person interviews with current and recently retired District Bishops, Directors of Mission, and the Chair of the Vic/Tas District Lay Call Committee (conducted between 22 January and 22 February 2018).

The survey consisted of 93 questions of which the majority were closed questions using various forms of Likert or semantic differential scales. Frequent allowance was made for respondents to insert open responses.

The interviews consisted of 31 questions. Interviewees submitted written responses to the majority of questions in advance of the interview. The interviews produced additional notes. Interviewees reviewed the final set of notes, and amended them as desired, before giving final approval.

115 congregations responded to the survey. This represents 22.2% of congregations within the LCA. All 6 Districts of the LCA were represented.

11 interviews were conducted. This represents 100% of District Bishops and Directors of Mission in office at 1 November 2017, plus 1 retired bishop. Only one bishop who had retired within the specified 18 month period declined interview.

The picture of the Call Process and the factors that impact it obtained from the data collected pertain to the status of the LCA as at 1 January 2018.

# 1 Background

## 1.1 The Current LCA Call Process

The researchers found it surprisingly difficult to obtain from official LCA documents and administrative bodies confirmation of the *precise* Call Process in operation within the LCA as at 1 January 2018, the census date for all of the data supplied in this report. It was determined that the Process varied in practice from District to District.

The endorsed general LCA Call process was, after some consultation with HRS/Church Worker Support and the General Secretary of the LCA, deemed to be as follows:

Pre-Call process

* Parish is declared vacant
* Parish identifies its main goals, and pastor attributes
* Parish sets up a Call Committee
* Parish approaches the Bishop for identification of candidates
* Committee is sent list of ALL pastors available for Call (with picture, ID, current general information)
* Committee narrows the list to approximately 6 candidates
* Committee contacts District Office with list
* District Office provides the detailed information (confidential self-assessment) for each candidate
* Committee narrows the list to approximately 3 candidates
* Committee arranges a date for a Call Meeting with the Bishop/his representative

Call Meeting process

* Parish meeting is arranged with Bishop or his representative in attendance
* Voting takes place by exhaustive vote
* Candidates are ranked (1,2,3)
* The Call Letter is signed
* The Bishop phones candidate no. 1 as soon as possible following the Call Meeting
* The Call Letter is sent through the District
* The Call is made public
* The candidate has 4 weeks from the time of receiving the Call letter to consider the Call
* The candidate accepts or declines. If he declines, and if candidates no. 2 and 3 are still available for Call, the Call is issued to them by order of preference. Alternatively, the parish may choose to hold another Call meeting to add to or change the list of prospective candidates. If so, the pre-Call process is re-entered.
* If no. 1 declines and no. 2 and 3 are no longer available, the pre-Call process is re-entered.

The endorsed LCA assignment process for Graduate Pastors (GPs) and Specific Ministry Pastors (SMPs) was deemed to be as follows. In both cases the meeting at which a parish votes to ask for an assignment is deemed a Call meeting.

Assignment of Graduate Pastor

* Parish calls a meeting and votes to approach the District Bishop to request that a Graduate Pastor be appointed
* Application is made to the College of Bishops via the District Bishop
* The College of Bishops identifies a suitable Graduate Pastor and provides information to the parish
* The graduate is assigned to the parish with a minimum 4 year call, with a review of their ministry occurring in year 2

Assignment of SMP

* Parish calls a meeting and votes that application be made for the candidate to be ordained as an SMP to serve them
* Parish prepares an application to District Bishop and District Church Council (DCC) to ask that an SMP be appointed
* Parish works with Bishop or his representative to identify a suitable SMP candidate
* The College of Bishops receives a request from the District Bishop for the candidate to enter the SMP program
* Once approved, the candidate is generally licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry for 12 months, while also preparing for ordination
* When the District Bishop and parish are satisfied with the development of the SMP an application for ordination is submitted to the College of Bishops
* Once ordination is approved, and the candidate ordained, a Call with specific conditions is issued

By-laws of the LCA (2015) relevant to the Call Process are:

5.1.4 Assignment of Candidates for the Ministry

5.1.4.1 A candidate's first call or appointment as a pastor of the Church shall be assigned by the College of Bishops serving as the Committee on Assignments.

5.1.4.2 The Committee on Assignments shall receive recommendations concerning the graduates of the Australian Lutheran College from the teaching staff, and it shall receive applications for assignment from parishes, boards of the Church, committees of a District, or other approved agency.

5.4 Calls and Transfers

PREAMBLE

5.4.1 Whereas the New Testament ministry is the office instituted by Christ for the public administration of the means of grace, that is, the preaching of the Gospel and the administering of the Sacraments, through which as through instruments the Holy Spirit works saving faith in the hearts of people (Matthew 10; Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 9:1-2; 1 Corinthians 3:5-7; 2 Corinthians 3:5-8; Augsburg Confession V; Formula Concordiae, Solida Declaratio XI. 29);

AND WHEREAS the office of the ministry is not a human institution but one instituted by God (2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28; Apology XIII. 11);
AND WHEREAS the procedures connected with calls and transfers shall serve, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, towards the fulfilment of the divine promise: ‘And I will give you shepherds after my own heart who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding’ (Jeremiah 3:15);

AND WHEREAS the calling of a pastor is not comparable with the purely secular procedures of employer and employee, but the acceptance of a call establishes a personal, spiritual, and sacred relationship between shepherd and flock in the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ:

BE IT DECLARED that the rules set out below are interpreted and carried out in the true evangelical spirit when

5.4.1.1  pastors and members in the congregation of the Church are imbued with a deep sense of the sanctity of the office of the ministry and, putting aside selfish considerations, are mindful of the fact that they are members of a larger body, the Church; and therefore, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, prayerfully strive to determine and to do that which is well-pleasing to God, and in the best interests of the whole Church of which they form a part;

5.4.1.2  every call and transfer rests upon a basis of mutual confidence and a sense of responsibility toward each other and before God, in which the Bishop and Church Council of the respective District and the responsible committees of the congregation or parish consider each case with due care before a recommendation is made, every parish gives earnest and serious consideration to the recommendations placed before it, and every pastor duly weighs the recommendations placed before him;

5.4.1.3  parishes take care, in considering the qualifications of a pastor to be called, that spiritual qualifications and not human and secular considerations are the deciding factor;

5.4.1.4  pastors who have served a parish for an extended term (normally ten [10] years and beyond) earnestly consider whether the Lord would not have them place their gifts in his service in another field and, particularly when a call is extended to them upon the recommendation of the responsible authorities of the Church, feel constrained to accept such call; and

5.4.1.5  parishes which for many years have been blessed through the talents of their pastor do not selfishly seek to prevent him from rendering similar service in another field.

General

5.4.2  In accordance with the Lutheran Confessions (Augsburg Confession XIV) the Church teaches that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments, unless regularly called. It furthermore upholds that a regular call to a specific field of labour is necessary. Within the Church, this right of call shall be exercised by

5.4.2.1  the congregations of the Church, which act in association as a parish; and

5.4.2.2  the Church or any regularly constituted body of the Church or of its Districts, to which such authority has been delegated.

This right of call shall be exercised according to the By-laws in this section.

5.4.3  In adopting By-laws for an orderly procedure which applies in common to the Church, its Districts and its congregations, the Church desires that they shall be interpreted and carried out in an evangelical spirit according to the principles and manner expressed in 1970 by the convention of the Third General Synod in the Preamble to the rules then adopted (Official Report, page 379, 1970 Indooroopilly - now Section 5.4 Preamble).

5.4.4  The relationship between a pastor and the Church, District, parish, congregation or other body the call of which he has accepted is personal, spiritual and sacred and is not intended to create any legal relationship or any employment relationship between the pastor and any member of any part of the Church.

5.4.5  A pastor shall not arbitrarily leave a pastorate and neither shall a pastor be arbitrarily dismissed by a parish. The regular call of a parish when accepted by a pastor shall constitute a permanent relationship terminated only for any of the following reasons:

5.4.5.1  the death of the pastor or the dissolution of the parish;

5.4.5.2  the acceptance of another office by the pastor or the resignation of the pastor;

5.4.5.3  dismissal of the pastor through disciplinary action taken pursuant to Article 10.1.2 of the Constitution and the following Section 10.3.8.5;

5.4.5.4  a major reorganisation of the parish when there is not a vacancy, but subject to the provisions of the following Section 5.4.15;

5.4.5.5  the physical or mental disability of the pastor, subject to the provisions of the following Section 5.4.16.2.3.1;

5.4.5.6  persistent or continued neglect of duty, subject to the provisions of the following Section 5.4.16.2.3.3; or

5.4.5.7  inability to conduct the pastoral office efficiently in that parish in view of local conditions, without necessarily being a reflection on the moral and spiritual character of the pastor, subject to the provisions of the following Section 5.4.16.2.3.2.

5.4.6  Practices such as preaching trial sermons, pastors making approaches to congregations for a call, congregations or committees, or individual members making approaches to a pastor prior to call, shall not be resorted to in connection with call procedures.

5.4.7  The provisions contained herein shall be so interpreted to mean that matters relating to changes of pastorate in parishes or fields which are under the supervision of a Board of the Church or of a Committee of a District of the Church shall first be referred to the respective Board or Committee for consideration.

5.4.8  If in the opinion of the Bishop of a District the circumstances warrant it, the Bishop, or Bishop's representative may be accompanied by members of the Church Council of the District at meetings held pursuant to these rules.

Procedure in Calls

5.4.9  The following procedure shall be followed in the calling of a pastor:

5.4.9.1  The Bishop of the District or the Bishop's representative shall convene a meeting of representatives of the parish to consider candidates proposed by the Bishop or the Bishop's representative on behalf of the Church Council of the District, by the representatives of the parish, and by any member of the parish through its secretary.

5.4.9.2  After due consideration of all suggested candidates the representatives of the parish shall determine by ballot one or more pastors to be nominated to the meeting of the parish.

5.4.9.3  At a duly convened meeting of the parish, the Bishop or the Bishop's representative generally presiding, the above nominations shall be submitted. Further nominations may be made at the meeting of the parish unless the meeting itself decides against accepting such nominations.

5.4.9.4  The meeting, voting by ballot, may accept or decline the nomination or nominations as decided by the representatives of the parish. If all nominees fail of election, or subsequently decline the call, the procedure shall be repeated.

5.4.10  A pastor shall as soon as possible notify the parish to which the pastor is currently called and the calling body of the receipt of a call, and shall forward a definite answer within twenty-eight [28] days after its receipt unless an extension of time is approved by the Bishop of the District from which the call emanates and the calling body.

5.4.11  Generally a pastor shall remain in a parish for at least three [3] years unless it is the first call or appointment, in which case the period shall be at least four [4] years. Any circumstances deemed to warrant an exception to the above shall be discussed with the respective Church Councils before a call is issued.

5.4.12 A pastor approaching the age of eligibility for retirement under the provision of the Pensions Fund of the Church, but still able to perform the function of the ministry adequately, may be recommended by the Bishop and Church Council of a District to be called for a stipulated period; this period is to be agreed upon by the Church Council and the parish. Such period, however, may be extended upon the request of the parish and with the consent of the Church Council of the District.

Transfers

5.4.13 The transfer of a pastor who has accepted a call to another charge shall normally take place three [3] months after acceptance of the call, unless the Bishop of the District in consultation with the calling parish and with the Bishop of any other District involved determines otherwise.

5.4.14. The costs of a transfer of a pastor shall be borne in the manner provided for by the Church in the rules of the Transfer Fund.

The Pastorate and Realignment

5.4.15. If a reorganisation of a parish takes place when there is not a vacancy, the Church Council of the District, after consultation with all congregations and the pastor or pastors concerned, shall determine whether the reorganisation is major. If it is determined to be major, existing calls are terminated three [3] months after the date of the determination, or such later date as may be specified in the determination, and a new call or new calls shall be required.

Noteworthy for the current review are the following provisions:

* The theology of the Call is bound up with the theology of the office of ministry (5.4.1 Preamble). The theology of the pastoral office is set out and discussed at length in the report **Pastoral Ministry in the Lutheran Church of Australia** (April 2016), pp. 49-106.
* That the minimum period of Call for a general ministry pastor (GMP) is 3 years, the maximum after which a new call should be considered is 10 years (5.4.11). However, this is expressed not as a rule, but as a general policy. The 10-year term disagrees with the **Bishop’s Handbook** 02.02 (Calling a Pastor, p.2, General guidelines 1a), which sets the term at 12 years.
* That the minimum period of Call for a Graduate Pastor (GP) is 4 years.
* That the By-Laws do not discuss SMPs (cf. 5.4.2)
* That practices such as trial sermons, a pastor approaching a parish or other calling body, or an individual approaching a pastor outside of a Call are prohibited.
* That a pastor shall respond to a Call within 28 days of receipt of the Call (5.4.10). That Call here refers to the signed Letter of Call (included among the Call Documents or Call Package) is assumed, but not stated.

After some discussion it was deemed that under current LCA policy a pastor can receive more than one Call at a time. In practice it can be the case that issuing a Call to a pastor already in receipt of a Call is discouraged by a District bishop.

In regard to the theology of the Call, this is set out in the Background to the document Calling a Pastor (**Bishop’s Handbook** 02.02) as follows:

Any method of calling a Pastor must take into account the Church’s understanding of what constitutes a call.

In “What constitutes a Call” (DSTO D10) the LCA has accepted the following statement:

*‘No one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called’ (C.A. XIV). The Lord calls individuals into the office of the ministry through the Christian congregations, Acts 13:1-4, and the Christian congregation, either alone, or together with other congregations, or through properly appointed representatives, calls qualified persons (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 2 Tim. 2:24,25; Acts 1:24) into the office of the ministry publicly to exercise the functions of this office. The minister of the Word is thus called by the Lord through His Church, and by the Church as through human agency and authority, but in obedience to the command of the Lord. He is therefore a servant of the Lord Jesus, a minister of the New Testament, a steward of the mysteries of God, called to serve by publicly administering the means of grace* (‘Theses on the Office of the Ministry’, VI.7, Theses of Agreement).

From this, it is clear that:

a: The Lord calls through His Church;

b: this call may be through a congregation or congregations acting together, or ‘through properly appointed representatives’;

c. no one can exercise this call [even for a limited time] without a proper call ‘rite vocatus’.

This same statement draws a clear distinction between the call that ‘inclines a person towards the special ministry of Word and Sacrament’, and which is conferred by the church by the Rite of Ordination, and the call whereby a pastor moves from place to place.

*“The position of the LCA in regard to the nature of the call is also indicated in its Letter of Call. The call is the invitation extended to a pastor by a congregation or parish upon his election by that congregation or parish to be their pastor.”* (DSTO 10)

The nature of this call is described as an ‘invitation’. How such an invitation (call) is issued, is not defined by Scripture or the Confessions.

## 1.2 The history of the current LCA Call Process

Brief discussion was entered into with a number of retired pastors and former District Presidents (the previous term for bishops) whose pastoral training occurred on both sides of the church pre-Union concerning the origins of the current Call Process. It was determined that at the time of Union of the two Synods (the ELCA and UELCA) each had a similar Call Process. Differences lay rather in the authority invested in the President versus the congregation or parish. The congregations was deemed to have the right to Call, not the church (with the exception of schools). Rules were developed mostly for pragmatic reasons. No limitation was placed on the length of a call, but a minimum was imposed so that the pastor would not be ‘bombarded’ by calls when he had just started. Pastors were free to accept or decline a call and could stay for their entire career in one place. Pragmatic issues around a pastor’s own need to move if not in receipt of a call, and similar factors, led to the introduction of the understanding that a normal call would be 7-10 years. Beyond 11 years a pastor would be considered obliged to accept a call, but could appeal. At the time of Union or shortly thereafter some investigation of the practice in Germany took place, but was rejected. There a parish issued a call, but could do so by advertising or by asking for expressions of interest and then requiring the pastor to interview and deliver a trial sermon. If this failed, the regional bishop would appoint a pastor.

How accurate these recollections are (those interviewed were in their late 80s and early 90s) requires further investigation via the Lutheran Archives. What these recollections tell us, however, is that the current system is based on the right of Call residing in the congregation/parish and the freedom of the pastor to decline or accept, with the President/bishop there to help facilitate the work of the Holy Spirit. Rules and policies that have developed since Union have their origin in pragmatic rather than theological reasons.

## 1.3 Call Processes currently in use in other Churches

Investigation was made of a number of the Call Processes in use in other denominations in Australia and in other Lutheran Churches considered to be comparable to the LCA (in Canada, the US, England, and South Africa). The practices of Synods across the Lutheran theological spectrum in these countries were considered.

Since, as Sections 2 and 3 of this report show, there is general consensus that the current LCA Call Process as a whole suits the synodicality of the church, its emphasis on the sovereignty of the congregation/parish as the calling body, the distinctiveness of the Process from workplace employment practices, and the role of the Holy Spirit, and since the current stresses on the Process are largely due to impact factors, discussion of comparative Call systems and processes is not entered into here in detail. In this section we offer a brief overview of the mechanisms pursued by other churches and the lessons to be learned from them. It should be noted that the options they offered were used as the basis for questions in the survey of congregations/parishes regarding possible alternative models.

A study of the documentation used by a Victorian Presbytery of the Uniting Church in Australia was conducted by Gillian Heintze (‘A study of the Placement Process documentation used by the Port Phillip West Presbytery of the Uniting Church in Australia with emphasis on streamlining the Lutheran Church of Australia and the Lutheran Church of New Zealand’s Call Process documentation’, October 2012), who was at that time Chair of the Vic/Tas District Call Committee. Interestingly, she found similar dissatisfaction with pastors’ personal profiles on the part of Call Committees. On the other hand, the process in use by the Uniting Church ensured that by the time a Call was issued there was absolute certainty that a pastor would accept it. Nominations are sourced through a number of avenues (the putting forward of names, expressions of interest by pastors). When the list is narrowed down and the fit between ministers and placement agreed, conversations between the two parties ensue. By the time that a particular candidate is decided upon and the call issued, the date of commencement has already been settled, along with any other items requiring negotiation. The minister is given 14 days on receipt of the call to respond in writing.

In the Australian context, it should be noted that other comparable denominations (Uniting Church, Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church) are diocesan or local in their structures. Calls or placements tend to be confined within a specific geographic region. The advantage of this is that pastors are (often) trained locally, come from the local area, and so are already familiar with the region in which they serve.

In the Presbyterian Church in Australia, the presbytery to some extent performs the function of a bishop, by placing an interim moderator in a vacant congregation. Calls must be approved by the presbytery.

Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) each bishop is responsible for how the Call Process is conducted within their own Synod (the equivalent of an LCA District). In practice, congregations can exercise some autonomy by calling for expressions of interest, while the bishop supplies names of suitable candidates also. One distinctive is that congregations can interview the candidates on their short list via phone, visit that pastor’s congregation to hear them preach a sermon (although it is advised that this be done anonymously and discreetly), and invite the two final candidates for interview and to preach a trial sermon. The Process and the role of the bishop in that Process is otherwise similar to that of the LCA. As in the LCA there are minor variations in practice between local synods. Congregation profiles and pastor profiles are involved. The ELCA uses a Mobility Database System (MDS) to track calls, rostered pastor information, and congregation and pastor profiles.

The North American Lutheran Church (NALC) stresses that calling a pastor is not the same as hiring an employee. However, up to two conference call interviews with each candidate are considered normative; background checks are conducted; referees contacted; DVD’s of sermons/worship leadership may be requested. After interview, the pastor and spouse are invited for an on-site visit, during which the candidate might preach and lead worship. When this happens conversations with other candidates are suspended until the congregation votes whether to Call the candidate. A pastor may enter into more than one conversation with a calling body at a time.

In the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) one distinctive is the role of the President, who gathers information regarding nominees to call and submits this to the calling congregations. In the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) the nomination of pastors to congregations and other calling bodies rests solely with the 12 Presidents.

In the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) up to 6 names are shortlisted and all are invited for interview via letter and follow-up phone call. Following interview a single candidate is chosen to be put forward to a Call Meeting and the other interviewees advised that a recommendation has been made and thanked for their participation in the search process. On issue of the Letter of Call the pastor has 30 days to respond. Graduate Pastors are required to attend the First Call Program for the first three years of their first call.

In the case of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain the congregation may call or employ a pastor. The bishop can, if requested, appoint a pastor-in-charge. The process is described as an employment strategy that involves the preparation of a job description and advertisement. The bishop works together with the congregation. References are consulted and a background check conducted. The successful candidate is issued an employment contract and undergoes a probation period before the post is confirmed.

In sum, the differences in Call Processes within Australia and in Lutheran Churches and Synods overseas concern:

* The degree to which a congregation/parish works with a bishop/President/presbytery or to which the bishop/President/presbytery exercises authority over the congregation/parish
* The degree to which the Process is considered a call versus employment
* The degree to which within a Process that is theologically considered a call interview processes are considered appropriate
* What kinds of interview processes are considered appropriate and how they are handled
* How localised and confined the movement of pastors is within a geographic region and whether pastors can move between regions.

It should be noted that, for the most part, within the Lutheran Churches and Synods studied many of the same elements of the LCA Call Process are involved. Focus has been on the differences. The similarities have simply not been outlined.

# 2 Results of the Survey on the LCA Call Process

## Introduction

In December 2017 every congregation within the LCA for Australia and New Zealand was invited by the LCA to respond to an online Survey on the LCA Call Process. This survey was in response to a resolution at the 2015 LCA General Convention where it was resolved that a review of the LCA Call process should be conducted.

The Survey on the LCA Call Process was drawn up and managed by the Australian Lutheran College (ALC) on behalf of the LCA under the supervision of Professor Wendy Mayer. The on line survey was opened on the 30th November 2017 and closed on the 19th February 2018.

There were 93 questions on the Call Process broken up into 4 Sections based on the Parish, the Call Process, the Needs and Expectations of the Parishand finally the Retraining, Reskilling and Review of Pastors. Most questions were closed but a large number allowed for open comments. Responses to the survey were confidential and in reporting on the results no individual congregation has been identified.

The reporting of the survey results covers each section of the survey in turn and is primarily tabular.

## Response to the Survey

115 congregations responded to the survey; 22.2% of congregations in the LCA which is statistically a satisfactory response rate. As not every congregation responded to every question total frequency for some tables is less than 115.

Overall, responses to the survey adequately represented all Districts, locations and regions within the LCA including the north and south islands of New Zealand. The NSW, NZ, VIC and WA Districts were all marginally over represented in the survey responses (Table 1). The larger LCA Districts of QLD and SA were underrepresented. 31% of responses came from rural congregations, 23% from regional centres; 38% were suburban and 8% inner city congregations.

Congregations were asked to identify their Local Government Area (LGA). This identifier was used to assign congregations within Australia the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage (SEIFA) with average scores calculated for LCA Districts and for location. Higher SEIFA scores indicate lower levels of disadvantage.

On average congregations in NSW/ACT, Vic/TAS and WA showed the lowest level of disadvantage; congregations in QLD showed a higher level of disadvantage (Table 3;

Figure *1*). Congregations in the SA/NT District showed, on average, the highest level of socioeconomic disadvantage, the lowest level of economic resources and the lowest index of education and occupation. Congregations in regional centres showed, on average, the highest level of disadvantage with inner city congregations the lowest (Table 4).

*Table 1 Response Rate by LCA District*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | LCA Number of Congregations (N=518) | Survey Number of Congregations (n=109) | LCA % of Total Congregations | Survey % of Total Congregations  |
| NSW/ACT | 48 | 13 | 9.3 | 11.9 |
| NZ | 13 | 5 | 2.5 | 4.6 |
| QLD | 138 | 20 | 26.6 | 18.3 |
| SA/NT | 215 | 37 | 41.5 | 33.9 |
| VIC/TAS | 88 | 26 | 17 | 23.9 |
| WA | 16 | 8 | 3.1 | 7.3 |
| Total | 518 | 109 | 100 | 100 |
| Missing District |  | 6 |  |  |
| Total Responses  |  | 115 |  |  |
| Response Rate |  | 22.2% |  |  |

*Table 2 Response Rate by LCA Location*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations | Percent |
| Rural / small town | 34 | 30.9 |
| Regional centre | 25 | 22.7 |
| Suburban | 42 | 38.2 |
| Inner city | 9 | 8.2 |
| Total | 110 | 100 |

*Table 3 SEIFA Indexes by LCA District Average Score*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | NSW/ACT | QLD | SA/NT | VIC/TAS | WA |
| Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage | 1007 | 1000 | 986 | 1007 | 1007 |
| Index of Economic Resources | 1010 | 990 | 987 | 996 | 1002 |
| Index of Education and Occupation | 1019 | 1004 | 980 | 1006 | 1004 |

*Figure 1 SEIFA Indexes by LCA District Average Score*

*Table 4 SEIFA Indexes by Location Average Score*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Rural / small town | Regional centre | Suburban | Inner city |
| Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage | 980 | 951 | 1033 | 1049 |
| Index of Economic Resources | 992 | 952 | 1021 | 980 |
| Index of Education and Occupation | 967 | 944 | 1036 | 1117 |

For 76% of respondents (87 congregations) responses to the survey represented the consensus view of the congregation. For the rest achieving consensus was made difficult because of time constraints and lack of opportunity. Most had spoken to at least a few of the congregation. Some had asked for feedback but received none.

**Section 1 Your Parish**

Most surveys were filled in by the chair of the congregation (50%; 57 congregations). Another 20% (24 congregations) were answered by the chair of the Call committee of the congregation. A large majority of those who answered (84%; 97 congregations) had served on a Call Committee within the past 10 years.

Most congregations (64%; 74 congregations) had acquired their pastor through the general call process (*Table 5*). 17% (20 congregations) had been assigned either an SMP or a Graduate pastor.

*Table 5 Your parish is currently served by*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| A pastor you secured through a general call | 74 | 64.3 |
| A Specific Ministry Pastor | 6 | 5.2 |
| A Graduate Pastor | 14 | 12.2 |
| Other | 20 | 17.4 |
| An Aboriginal pastor | 1 | 0.9 |
| Total | 115 | 100 |

44% of congregations (51 congregations) had a pastor who served two or more congregations (Table 6). Most congregations in this category believed the congregations within their Parish were different in how they needed to be served (53%; 34 congregations); 23% (15 congregations) believed they were very different.

*Table 6 Your pastor or pastors serve*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency |  Percent |
| A single congregation | 46 | 40 |
| A parish with two congregations | 27 | 23.5 |
| A parish with three or more congregations | 24 | 20.9 |
| Other | 18 | 15.7 |
| Total | 115 | 100 |

50% of congregations (57 Congregations) had not been vacant for over 2 years. Another 19 congregations (17% of respondents) were currently in a vacancy. Of these, 74% (14 congregations), had been vacant for at least 12 months (Table 7). 72% (13 congregations) currently vacant anticipated finding a full time pastor in the next 2 years. However, 4 congregations did not think they would secure a pastor within the next 5 years mainly as a result of funding issues.

*Table 7 How long vacant?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Less than 6 months | 3 | 15.8 |
| Less than 12 months | 2 | 10.5 |
| 12 to 18 months | 8 | 42.1 |
| 18 months to 2 years | 3 | 15.8 |
| 2 to 5 years | 2 | 10.5 |
| More than 10 years | 1 | 5.3 |
| Total | 19 | 100 |

A large majority of congregations (97%) had less than 25% of their congregation under 10 years of age (Table 8). 35% of congregations had 25 to 50% of their congregation aged between 30 to 50 years. 57% of congregations had 25 to 50% of their congregation aged between 50 to 70 years. 15% of congregations had between 50 and 75% of their congregation aged over 70 years.

*Table 8 Congregations by age %*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Under 10 years | 10 to 20 years | 20 to 30 years | 30 to 50 years | 50 to 70 years | Over 70 years |
| Under 25% | 96.9 | 96.7 | 95.8 | 63.4 | 18.8 | 45.7 |
| 25 to 50% | 3.1 | 3.3 | 4.2 | 34.7 | 56.4 | 34.3 |
| 51 to 75% |  |  |  | 2 | 20.8 | 15.2 |
| Over 75% |  |  |  |  | 4 | 4.8 |
| Total % | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Number of congregations | *96* | *91* | *95* | *101* | *101* | *101* |

63% of congregations had over 75% of the congregation Australian born (Table 9). 15% of congregations had between 25 and 50% of their congregation European born. 5% of congregations described 25 to 50% of their congregation as ethnically diverse. 99% of congregations who responded to the survey held a worship service in English.

Table 9 Congregations by cultural/ethnic mix

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander | Pacific Islander | Australian born | Maori | New Zealand born | Scandinavian | European | African | SE Asian | Korean | Chinese | Middle Eastern | Ethnically diverse |
| Under 25% | 100 | 100 | 5.8 | 100 | 90.9 | 97.6 | 77.9 | 95.7 | 97.7 | 100 | 97.3 | 100 | 92.7 |
| 25 to 50% |  |  | 7.8 |  | 2.3 | 2.4 | 14.7 | 4.3 | 2.3 |  | 2.7 |  | 4.9 |
| 51 to 75% |  |  | 23.3 |  | 2.3 |  | 4.4 |  |  |  |  |  | 2.4 |
| Over 75% |  |  | 63.1 |  | 4.5 |  | 2.9 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total % | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |  |
| Number of congregations | *43* | *39* | *103* | *32* | *44* | *42* | *68* | *47* | *44* | *33* | *37* | *37* | *41* |

The majority of congregations who responded to the survey (74%; 81 congregations) were small with less than 100 in worship.

*Table 10 Size of congregation*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Small (less than 100 in worship) | 81 | 74.3 |
| Medium (100 to 200 in worship) | 22 | 20.2 |
| Large (more than 200 in worship) | 6 | 5.5 |
| Total | 109 | 100 |

## Section 2: LCA Call Process

**Issuing the Call**

The majority of congregations (52%; 56 congregations) strongly agreed or agreed that the endorsed Call process matched their congregation’s experience. However 31% of congregations (33 congregations) strongly disagreed or disagreed with this view (Table 11).

*Table 11 The endorsed call process matches the congregation's experience on Scale of 1 Strongly disagree to 5 Strongly Agree*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Strongly disagree 1 | 26 | 24.3 |
| 2 | 7 | 6.5 |
| 3 | 18 | 16.8 |
| 4 | 17 | 15.9 |
| Strongly agree 5 | 39 | 36.4 |
| Total | 107 | 100 |

Based on average scores LCA congregations in NZ, NSW and QLD disagreed most strongly that the endorsed Call process matched their congregation’s experience. Regional centres and inner city congregations also disagreed most strongly as did large congregations of more than 200 attendees.

**Satisfaction with the Call Process**

The majority of congregations 54% (57 congregations) believed the Call process was inadequate but could be improved (*Table 12*).

*Table 12 Experience of the Call process percent of congregations*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| The process works very well | 17 | 16 |
| The process is adequate but could be improved | 23 | 21.7 |
| The process is inadequate but could be improved | 57 | 53.8 |
| The process is inadequate and needs to be replaced | 9 | 8.5 |
| Total | 106 | 100 |

The view that the process was inadequate but could be improved was held also by over 50% of rural, regional and suburban congregations and by over 65% of inner city congregations. Based on LCA District congregations in WA (71.4%), SA/NT (61.1%) and QLD (60%) believed this most strongly.

However 17% of congregations in NSW/ACT and 12% of congregations in VIC/TAS went further and believed the process was inadequate and needed to be replaced. 18% of rural congregations also thought the process inadequate and needed to be replaced compared to only 5% of suburban congregations.

No congregations (0%) in NSW/ACT, NZ or WA were of the view that the process works very well. And only 8% of regional congregations, 11% of inner city congregations and 12% of rural congregations thought the process works very well.

The majority of congregations 72% (72 congregations) believed the Call process is largely a human mechanism but the Holy Spirit can work through it (*Table 13*). Based on LCA District 90% of congregations in QLD and 75% of congregations in SA/NT took this view. However 100% of congregations in NZ believed the Holy Spirit is the prime mover in the Call process.

*Table 13 View on the Call process percent of congregations*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| The Holy Spirit is the prime mover in the Call process | 19 | 19 |
| The Call process is largely a human mechanism but the Holy Spirit can work through it | 72 | 72 |
| The Call process is entirely a human mechanism and has no more to do with the Holy Spirit than any other human organizational decision | 3 | 3 |
| The Call process is a human innovation and can be altered to suit contemporary needs | 6 | 6 |
| Total % | 100 | 100 |

47% of congregations (50 congregations) either strongly agreed or agreed with a statement of overall satisfaction with the Call process (*Table 14*). However 30% of congregations (32 congregations) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.

Based on LCA District congregations in NZ, NSW/ACT and QLD were least satisfied with the overall Call process along with regional congregations. 40% of regional congregations either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement compared to only 20% of suburban congregations.

*Table 14 Overall I am satisfied with the Call process on Scale of 1 Strongly disagree to 5 Strongly Agree*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Strongly disagree 1 | 9 | 8.4 |
| 2 | 23 | 21.5 |
| 3 | 25 | 23.4 |
| 4 | 42 | 39.3 |
| Strongly agree 5 | 8 | 7.5 |
| Total | 107 | 100 |

70% of congregations (75 congregations) strongly agreed or agreed that the district office was supportive in the Call process (*Table 15*).

*Table 15 The district office was supportive in the process*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Strongly disagree 1 | 5 | 4.7 |
| 2 | 9 | 8.4 |
| 3 | 18 | 16.8 |
| 4 | 38 | 35.5 |
| Strongly agree 5 | 37 | 34.6 |
| Total | 107 | 100 |

39% of congregations (42 congregations) strongly agreed or agreed that the Call process occurred in a timely manner (*Table 16*). However 28% of congregations (30 congregations) strongly disagree or disagreed with this view. Based on LCA District congregations in NSW/ACT disagreed most strongly with the view that the Call process occurs in a timely manner.

*Table 16 The process occurred in a timely manner*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Strongly disagree 1 | 17 | 15.9 |
| 2 | 13 | 12.1 |
| 3 | 35 | 32.7 |
| 4 | 31 | 29 |
| Strongly agree 5 | 11 | 10.3 |
| Total | 107 | 100 |

A large majority of congregations 87% (90 congregations) strongly disagreed or disagreed that the Call process is rushed (*Table 17*). 47.5% of congregations (49 congregations) strongly agreed or agreed that the Call process is slow.

*Table 17 The process is rushed*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Strongly disagree 1 | 59 | 56.7 |
| 2 | 31 | 29.8 |
| 3 | 9 | 8.7 |
| 4 | 3 | 2.9 |
| Strongly agree 5 | 2 | 1.9 |
| Total | 104 | 100 |

48.6% of congregations (52 congregations) strongly agreed or agreed that the congregation received all the information they needed (*Table 19*). However 31.8% of congregations (34 congregations) strongly disagree or disagreed with this view.

*Table 18 We received all the information we needed*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Strongly disagree 1 | 9 | 8.4 |
| 2 | 25 | 23.4 |
| 3 | 21 | 19.6 |
| 4 | 34 | 31.8 |
| Strongly agree 5 | 18 | 16.8 |
| Total | 107 | 100 |

Based on average scores LCA congregations in NZ, QLD and WA disagreed most strongly that the congregation received all the information they needed. Inner city, small and regional congregations also disagreed most strongly.

The majority of congregations 52.4% (55 congregations) believed a regularly updated on-line training package for the Call process would be of benefit. This was supported by 75% of congregations in NZ, 71% of congregations in WA and 62% of congregations in NSW/ACT. However the majority of congregations in SA (66.6%) disagreed and did not believe such a training package would be of benefit.

**Undertaking the Call**

89% of congregations (94 congregations) believed they were adequately prepared as a congregation to undertake their last call. Of those who were not prepared (11 congregations) the most common explanation was an inability to find the right information.

47.5% of congregations (30 congregations) had considered 6 to 10 pastors at their first Call committee meeting (*Table 19*). The average number of pastors considered at a first Call meeting is 6 (

*Table 21*).

*Table 19 How many pastors did the Call committee consider at its first meeting?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| 3 | 17 | 27 |
| 4 | 7 | 11.1 |
| 5 | 9 | 14.3 |
| 6 | 12 | 19 |
| 7 | 6 | 9.5 |
| 8 | 5 | 7.9 |
| 10 | 7 | 11.1 |
| Total | 63 | 100 |

57.3% of congregations (59 congregations) had between 3 to 6 pastors on their final Call list (*Table 20*). The average number of pastors on a final Call list is 2 (

*Table 21*).

*Table 20 How many pastors were on your final Call list?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Number of pastors on final Call List  | Frequency | Percent |
| 1 | 24 | 23.3 |
| 2 | 20 | 19.4 |
| 3 | 50 | 48.5 |
| 4 | 8 | 7.8 |
| 6 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 103 | 100 |

*Table 21 On average how many pastors?*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | n | Maximum | Average |
| How many pastors did the Call committee consider at its first meeting? | 63 | 10 | 6 |
| How many pastors were on your final Call list? | 103 | 6 | 2 |

For the majority of congregations 60% (62 congregations) their Call to Candidate 1 was not successful. Of these, 51% did not call the next pastor on their list and most, 79.6% (43 congregations), convened another Call meeting to draw up a new list. The main explanation for why the next pastor on the list was not called was a matter of timing. In the time it had taken to call the first pastor the second on the list was no longer available. 73% of congregations who issued a second call (22 congregations) were again unsuccessful in calling a pastor.

35.4% of congregations (31 congregations) had to go through the pre Call process at least 3 times before a pastor accepted their Call (*Table 22*). One congregation went through the process 8 times. The average number of times for all congregations is 2 rounds (*Table 23*).

Congregations in WA, NSW/ACT and VIC/TAS have experienced the highest number of rounds before a pastor accepted their Call. Congregations in regional centres also experienced the highest number of rounds and on average had to go through the pre Call process at least 3 times.

*Table 22 How many times did you go through the pre Call process before a pastor accepted your call?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Number of times through the pre Call Process | Frequency | Percent |
| 1 | 37 | 42.5 |
| 2 | 19 | 21.8 |
| 3 | 12 | 13.8 |
| 4 | 11 | 12.6 |
| 5 | 5 | 5.7 |
| 6 | 1 | 1.1 |
| 7 | 1 | 1.1 |
| 8 | 1 | 1.1 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

*Table 23 Average times through the pre Call process before a Pastor accepted your call*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | n | Maximum | Average |
| How many times did you have to go through the pre-Call process before a pastor accepted your call/your pastor was assigned? | 87 | 8 | 2 |

**Information**

**First Call Committee Meeting**

The greatest information gap at the first Call Committee meeting was with regard to the names of pastors interested in receiving a Call. 63 congregations described this as most important and yet only 35 congregations actually had the information available to them (*Table 24*).

The next greatest gap was information with regard to pastors not interested in receiving a Call with 43 congregations describing this as most important but with only 17 congregations actually having the information.

All congregations had information on the pastors who were available for Call. 12 congregations who had information on pastors already in receipt of a Call did not consider that information most important.

In the open comments a number of congregations again reinforced the importance of knowing whether a pastor was genuinely interested in a call. This was vital information. Others commented on the need for up to date information on pastors including their ministry styles. Congregations in NZ needed to know if pastors in Australia would seriously consider a parish in NZ before issuing a call.

*Table 24 Information available at first Call Committee meeting*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations for which information most important  | Number of congregations with information actually available  |
| Up to date service information about pastors – current place of service, length of time in existing parish, previous places of service | 80 | 64 |
| Names of all pastors available for call  | 78 | 78 |
| Up to date personal information about pastors – age, recent education, family at home | 72 | 47 |
| Names of pastors interested in receiving a Call  | 63 | 35 |
| Names of pastors not interested in receiving a Call  | 43 | 17 |
| Names of pastors already in receipt of a Call  | 26 | 38 |

**First Call Meeting**

With regard to information available at the first Call meeting the only information considered most important which was not available to most congregations was confidential up to date LAMP information (*Table 25*). Alternatively not every congregation considered information from the Bishop or the District to be most important even thought it was available to them.

*Table 25 Information available at first Call meeting*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations for which information most important  | Number of congregations with information actually available |
| Information from the Bishop  | 82 | 83 |
| Information from the District  | 71 | 76 |
| Phone interview with candidates  | 64 | 58 |
| Confidential up to date LAMP information  | 57 | 39 |
| Personal witness from congregation  | 28 | 25 |
| Personal witness from Call committee  | 24 | 26 |
| Visit by candidate to congregation  | 21 | 15 |
| Personal interview with candidates  | 18 | 11 |
| Personal witness from candidates’ existing parishioners  | 17 | 10 |
| Skype interview with candidates  | 13 | 4 |
| Visit to candidates’ congregation  | 11 | 6 |
| Trial sermon by candidate  | 3 | 4 |

The greatest gap in information available to congregations before issuing a Call was with regard to the pastor not being interested in receiving a Call and a pastor’s strengths in ministry (*Table 26*). This information was described as most important by most congregations yet was not known to a significant number of congregations. Alternatively a number of congregations did not describe information on pastor’s interests, age, years in ministry and family information as most important even though that information was actually known to them.

Suggestions for other information which would be useful included pastor nominated referees and if calling a pastor from another District information from the local Bishop.

*Table 26 Information available before issuing Call*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations for which information most important | Number of congregations where information actually known |
| The pastor was available for call  | 94 | 98 |
| Strengths in ministry | 84 | 66 |
| Any special needs/requirements of the pastor or partner or family  | 46 | 48 |
| The pastor was not interested in receiving a call  | 41 | 22 |
| Age  | 40 | 85 |
| Years in ministry  | 36 | 82 |
| Family size & ages of children | 33 | 70 |
| Years in existing parish  | 32 | 78 |
| The pastor was already in receipt of a call  | 21 | 35 |
| Health of pastor | 20 | 26 |
| Interests | 18 | 48 |
| Size of existing parish  | 15 | 53 |
| Ongoing training/ extra-curricular education  | 15 | 34 |
| Partner’s career and mobility | 13 | 33 |
| Accrued leave  | 11 | 10 |

**Open Comments on Information**

In the open question there was further comment on the lack of up to date and consistent information around pastors including information available through LAMP. Also much of the information that was available was not that useful. Congregations were looking for open, consistent and meaningful appraisal of a pastor’s experience, skills, challenges and availability for call. Rural congregations wished for an honest take on driving long distances and remote living. Regional parishes looked for information on housing requirements. Suburban congregations were interested in information about interdenominational experience while some city congregations would like to know more about pastor views on women’s ordination and abilities in administration. All were interested in knowing more about accrued leave and plans for retirement. There was some ambivalence about the need for detailed information around family and partners.

### Timing

**Delay in the Call Process**

Delay in the Call process was caused most often through difficulty in arranging a suitable time with the Bishop and congregation for the Call meeting (*Table 27*). Other sources of delay which were cited by most congregations were writing the Call documents and waiting 4 weeks to hear from a candidate.

*Table 27 What creates the most delay in the Call Process?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations  |
| Arranging a suitable time with the Bishop and congregation for the Call meeting | 55 |
| Writing the Call documents | 48 |
| Waiting 4 weeks to hear from a candidate | 44 |
| Waiting for the pastor to vacate the parish before beginning the pre-Call process. | 38 |
| Arranging suitable times for the Call committee to meet | 36 |
| Waiting for the Bishop to respond with names of all candidates available for call | 31 |
| Reading through Call materials | 23 |
| Contacting candidates prior to the Call meeting | 20 |
| Giving the congregation 2 weeks’ notice of the Call meeting | 19 |
| Setting up a representative Call committee from the congregation | 16 |
| Waiting for the District Office to respond with LAMP information | 13 |
| Waiting for the Bishop to contact a candidate | 6 |

A large majority of congregations (90%; 94 congregations) believed the Call process should start when a pastor announces they have accepted a call to serve elsewhere.

*Table 28 When should the Call process start?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency |  Percent |
| When a pastor announces they have accepted a call to serve elsewhere | 94 | 89.5 |
| When a pastor vacates a parish | 11 | 10.5 |
| Total | 105 | 100 |

60.2% of congregations (62 congregations) believed a pastor should be able to receive more than 1 Call at a time.

59% of congregations (61 congregations) believed that 4 weeks is the right length of time given to respond to a call. However 39% (40 congregations) believed 4 weeks was too long.

**Length of the Call Process**

For 47.5% of congregations (48 congregations) the entire Call process took up to 12 months (*Table 29*). For 15% of congregations (15 congregations) it took at least 2 years; for 5 congregations it took longer than 3 years. For the majority of congregations in WA it took less than 6 months. For NSW it took either 6 or 12 months. For all other districts the majority of congregations took 6 to 12 months. However there were exceptions with 15% of congregations in NSW and 17% of congregations in WA taking 2 years before a pastor accepted their Call.

*Table 29 Calculating from the time your previous pastor vacated the parish/congregation until your current pastor accepted your Call, how long did the Call process take?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Less than 6 months | 22 | 21.8 |
| 6 to 12 months | 26 | 25.7 |
| 1 year | 19 | 18.8 |
| 18 months | 16 | 15.8 |
| 2 years | 9 | 8.9 |
| 3 years | 1 | 1 |
| More than 3 years | 5 | 5 |
| Don't remember | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 101 | 100 |

For the majority of inner city congregations (66.7%; 6 congregations) the entire Call process took less than 6 months. For most rural (36.7%; 11 congregations) and suburban (29%; 11 congregations) congregations it took 6 to 12 months. For most regional congregations (33%; 8 congregations) the process took longer; 18 months. 60% of medium sized congregations secured a pastor within 12 months but only 44% of small congregations and 40% of large congregations.

**Open Comments on Timing**

A number of the open comments on delay in the Call process focused on having to wait for a pastor to leave before beginning the Call process; congregations should be able to begin the Call process once a pastor has accepted a call. Another delay centred on writing up distribution materials for the congregation and that even more resources would be necessary if the process were to change.

Other congregations mentioned that four weeks was too long to wait for an answer to a call and would not be necessary if only pastors who were genuinely interested were called. Parishes in NZ mentioned their expectation of long vacancies which had become the norm. For many congregations multiple rejections caused long delays in the process. One congregation also mentioned the gap between acceptance of a call and when a pastor finally arrives often a result of school calendars and family requirements. There was mention of the need to recognize the Holy Spirit at work in the process.

### Transparency

Only 13% of congregations agreed with the view that the Call process favours the calling parties (*Table 30*). Instead the majority of congregations (68%; 68 congregations) believe the Call process favours pastors. 100% of congregations in WA, 79% of those in VIC/TAS and 75% of congregations in NZ believe this. 73% of rural congregations also took this view compared to 56% of inner city congregations.

41% (40 congregations) believe the Bishops and district officials have too much influence within the present Call system. 71% of congregations in WA and 58% of those in QLD believe this. Only 34% of congregations in SA hold this view.

*Table 30 With regard to the existing LCA Call process (n=100)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations who agree | Percent of congregations who agree |
| The Call process favours the calling bodies | 14 | 14.1 |
| The Call process favours pastors | 68 | 68.0 |
| Bishops and district officials have too much influence within the present Call system | 40 | 40.8 |
| Bishops and district officials should have more influence in the Call system | 13 | 13.4 |

58% of congregations (60 congregations) were very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of pastors made available for Call (*Table 31*). Only 13% (13 congregations) were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied. On average congregations in NZ were least satisfied and congregations in VIC/TAS most satisfied.

*Table 31 How satisfied were you with the quality of pastors made available for Call?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Very dissatisfied 1 | 3 | 2.9 |
| 2 | 10 | 9.6 |
| 3 | 31 | 29.8 |
| 4 | 37 | 35.6 |
| Very satisfied 5 | 23 | 22.1 |
| Total | 104 | 100 |

Most congregations (63%; 60 congregations) agreed that overall the confidential information available through LAMP is adequate for purpose (

*Table 32*). On average congregations in NZ and VIC/TAS were least satisfied with the information available through LAMP.

The majority of congregations believed that a congregation should know their pastor has been approached for a Call (75.7%; 78 congregations) and that they should know how much recreation leave/long service leave a pastor to whom they are about to issue a Call has accrued (86.4%; 89 congregations) (

*Table 32*). Both of these views were held by the majority of congregations in every District.

Congregations also agreed that they should be able to place the name of any pastor on their list of candidates (59%; 59 congregations) (

*Table 32*) with the exception of WA where the majority of congregations disagreed with this view.

The majority of congregations did not believe that all shortlisted candidates should know the outcome of a Call meeting (

*Table 32*) with opposition to this strongest in NZ (75% disagreed) and WA (71% disagreed). Congregations, however, in SA/NT agreed with this view (53% agreed).

*Table 32 With regard to information (n=103)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations who agree | Percent of congregations who agree |
| Overall the confidential information available through LAMP is adequate for purpose | 60 | 63.2 |
| Congregations should be able to place the name of any pastor on their list of candidates | 59 | 59 |
| Should a congregation know their pastor has been approached for a Call | 78 | 75.7 |
| All shortlisted candidates should know the outcome of a Call meeting | 48 | 47.5 |
| A congregation should know how much recreation leave/long service leave a pastor to whom they are about to issue a Call has accrued | 89 | 86.4 |

Most congregations found the pre-Call phone conversation with candidates in which they are asked a hypothetical question as to whether ‘there any reasons … why you would not give serious consideration to a call’ to be helpful (72 congregations) (*Table 33*). Another 41 congregations, however, also found it difficult, a waste of time, confusing or redundant.

*Table 33 Part of the Call process may involve a pre-Call phone conversation with candidates in which they are asked a hypothetical question as to whether ‘there any reasons … why you would not give serious consideration to a call’. How would you describe this pre-Call phone conversation as part of the Call process?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations |
| Helpful | 72 |
| Useful | 58 |
| Easy | 16 |
| Difficult | 14 |
| A waste of time | 12 |
| Confusing | 11 |
| Redundant | 4 |

The majority of congregations (74%; 75 congregations) though it very important or important for all LCA parishes to follow precisely the same Call process (

*Table 34*). On average congregations in rural and regional centres thought it more important than those in suburban or city congregations. Across LCA Districts congregations in NSW/ACT and WA thought it most important.

*Table 34 How important is it for ALL LCA parishes to follow precisely the same Call process?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency |  Percent |
| Very unimportant 1 | 8 | 7.8 |
| 2 | 7 | 6.9 |
| 3 | 12 | 11.8 |
| 4 | 31 | 30.4 |
| Very important 5 | 44 | 43.1 |
| Total | 102 | 100 |

The majority of congregations (77%; 79 congregations) thought it very important or important for all LCA Districts to follow precisely the same Call process (

*Table 34*). On average congregations in regional centres thought it most important. Also congregations in the Districts of NSW/ACT, SA/NT and WA on average, thought it most important.

*Table 35 How important is it for ALL LCA Districts to follow precisely the same Call process?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Very unimportant 1 | 8 | 7.8 |
| 2 | 7 | 6.8 |
| 3 | 9 | 8.7 |
| 4 | 33 | 32 |
| Very important 5 | 46 | 44.7 |
| Total | 103 | 100 |

The majority of congregations (78%; 80 congregations) thought information about a pastor's family circumstances to the Call process to be very important or important (Table 36). It was also very important to know how much recreation leave/long service leave a pastor to whom they are about to issue a Call had accrued (*Table 37*).

*Table 36 How important is information about a pastor's family circumstances to the Call process?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Very unimportant 1 | 2 | 1.9 |
| 2 | 5 | 4.9 |
| 3 | 16 | 15.5 |
| 4 | 34 | 33 |
| Very important 5 | 46 | 44.7 |
| Total | 103 | 100 |

*Table 37 Should a congregation know how much recreation leave/long service leave a pastor to whom they are about to issue a Call has accrued?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Yes | 89 | 86.4 |
| No | 14 | 13.6 |
| Total | 103 | 100 |

The majority of congregations (66%; 67 congregations) thought information about a pastor’s family circumstances or that of their partner should become a formal part of the Call Process (*Table 38*).

*Table 38 Should information about a pastor’s family circumstances or that of their partner become a formal part of the Call Process?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Yes | 67 | 66.3 |
| No | 34 | 33.7 |
| Total | 101 | 100 |

Most congregations agreed that Pastors should let the Bishop in their current District know if they are interested in a call (99 congregations), that an interview before a Call meeting between the Call committee and potential candidates is a good idea (83 congregations) and that Pastors should let the bishop of the District in which a parish is vacant know if they are interested in a call (81 congregations) (*Table 39*).

Congregations, however, were less sure about inviting a single preferred candidate for a visit before the Call meeting (45 congregations agreed) while views that Members of a Call committee should visit the current congregation of a potential candidate (17 congregations agreed) or that congregations should have the option of inviting a single preferred candidate for a visit and ‘trial sermon’ before the Call meeting (11 congregations agreed) were even less popular (*Table 39*).

*Table 39 Views of congregations*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations who agree  |
| Pastors should let the Bishop in their current District know if they are interested in a call | 99 |
| An interview before a Call meeting between the Call committee and potential candidates is a good idea | 83 |
| Pastors should let the bishop of the District in which a parish is vacant know if they are interested in a Call | 81 |
| Congregations should have the option of inviting a single preferred candidate for a visit before the Call meeting | 45 |
| Members of a Call committee should visit the current congregation of a potential candidate | 17 |
| Congregations should have the option of inviting a single preferred candidate for a visit and ‘trial sermon’ before the Call meeting | 11 |

Rate my Pastor and Rate my Congregations websites were considered a very bad or bad idea by 72% and 63% of congregations. 17% and 20% of congregations thought them a very good or good idea.

**Open Comments on Transparency**

Comments on transparency included the need for pastor reviews other than by self-assessment; perhaps by means of the Bishop or the current Chair of a congregation. Information on health issues including mental well-being were also raised by some congregations as necessary in a transparent process. Other congregations felt that there were issues of confidentiality around some of the information listed in the survey.

Again there was mention of need to recognize the place of God and the divine in the whole process.

### Care for the Pastor, care for the Parish

**Care for the Pastor**

The overwhelming majority of congregations (94%; 96 congregations) believed there should be support available for the pastor/family of the pastor receiving the Call during the decision-making process (*Table 40*). Most congregations felt that the District should provide this support (*Table 41*).

*Table 40 Should there be support available for the pastor/family of the pastor receiving the Call during the decision-making process?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Yes | 96 | 94.1 |
| No | 6 | 5.9 |
| Total | 102 | 100 |

*Table 41 Who should provide support for the pastor/family of the pastor receiving the Call during the decision-making process?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations who agree |
| The District | 86 |
| The Parish the pastor currently serves | 38 |
| The Parish issuing the call | 25 |

**Care for the Parish**

The majority of congregations (69%; 70 congregations) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal that all pastors should be required to move parish after a set length of time, with no extension allowed (*Table 42*).

*Table 42 ALL pastors should be required to move parish after a set length of time, with no extension allowed*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Strongly disagree  | 46 | 45.5 |
| 2 | 24 | 23.8 |
| 3 | 14 | 13.9 |
| 4 | 11 | 10.9 |
| Strongly agree 5 | 6 | 5.9 |
| Total | 101 | 100 |

A smaller number, however, (44%; 45 congregations) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the view that all pastors should be required to move parish after a set length of time, with one extension allowed (in negotiation with parish and District bishop) (*Table 43*). 35% (36 congregations) strongly agreed or agreed with this proposal.

*Table 43 ALL pastors should be required to move parish after a set length of time, with one extension allowed (in negotiation with parish and District bishop)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Strongly disagree 1 | 26 | 25.2 |
| 2 | 19 | 18.4 |
| 3 | 22 | 21.4 |
| 4 | 22 | 21.4 |
| Strongly agree 5 | 14 | 13.6 |
| Total | 103 | 100 |

**Open Comments on Care for the Pastor, Care for the Parish**

In the open comments a number of congregations believed the Bishop was the obvious choice for support of pastors and their families. Some rural congregations thought their geographic location may made it difficult for those issuing the call to support an incoming pastor.

The discussion over tenure was varied. Some believed that even in 7 years a pastor could not necessarily achieve a great deal. Others that tenure beyond 10 years in one parish should require negotiation with the Bishop. There was some mention of the need for intervention if a pastor overstayed their tenure.

More than one congregation mentioned the need for the LCA to put more resources into training more pastors. There was also regular mention of the need for ongoing prayer support of pastors.

## Section 3: Models of the Call Process

**Endorsed Call Process**

The top three call models based on the endorsed system given the highest vote by congregations were first the endorsed Call system but the Bishop speaks to pastors to determine interest before submitting names to a Call committee; second the endorsed Call system but pastors nominate themselves to go into a pool of available pastors (this list is made available to Call committees by the Bishop, from which a short list is drawn up prior to a Call meeting); and third the endorsed Call system but with standardized phone interviews with shortlisted candidate/s prior to a Call meeting (*Table 44*).

*Table 44 The following Call models are based on the present process. Tick up to 5 (or none) that would best suit your congregation*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations who believe model would suit their congregation |
| Endorsed Call system but Bishop speaks to pastors to determine interest before submitting names to Call Committee | 68 |
| Endorsed Call system but pastors nominate themselves to go into a pool of available pastors. This list is made available to Call committees by Bishop, from which a short list is drawn up prior to Call Meeting | 63 |
| Endorsed Call system but with standardized phone interviews with shortlisted candidate/s prior to Call Meeting | 49 |
| Endorsed Call system but with face to face/Skype interviews of shortlisted candidate/s prior to Call Meeting | 48 |
| Endorsed Call system  | 27 |
| Endorsed Call system but all pastors must be available for Call after 3 years with the expectation of moving parish after a set period of tenure (e.g. 6 years) with a possible extension of 3 years negotiable | 24 |
| Endorsed Call system but shortlisted candidate/s visits the congregation prior to Call Meeting | 20 |
| Ministry graduates go through the same Call process as all other pastors | 17 |
| Endorsed Call system but shortlisted candidate/s give trial sermon prior to Call Meeting | 6 |

NSW/ACT, NZ, QLD and VIC/TAS congregations all gave the highest preference to the first overall preference; the endorsed Call system but Bishop speaks to pastors to determine interest before submitting names to a Call Committee.

SA/NT and WA congregations preferred the second overall preference; the endorsed Call system but pastors nominate themselves to go into a pool of available pastors (this list is made available to Call committees by the Bishop, from which a short list is drawn up prior to a Call meeting).

Congregations in WA also showed an equal preference for three other models including the endorsed Call system but shortlisted candidate/s give trial sermon prior to Call meeting; the endorsed Call system but with standardized phone interviews with shortlisted candidate/s prior to Call meeting and the endorsed Call system but with face to face/Skype interviews of shortlisted candidate/s prior to Call meeting.

Congregations in rural areas showed an equal support for the two preferred overall models; the endorsed Call system but Bishop speaks to pastors to determine interest before submitting names to a Call Committee and the endorsed Call system but pastors nominate themselves to go into a pool of available pastors (this list is made available to Call committees by Bishop, from which a short list is drawn up prior to a Call meeting).

Regional and suburban congregations both gave highest preference to the first overall preference; the endorsed Call system but Bishop speaks to pastors to determine interest before submitting names to a Call Committee.

Inner city congregations gave highest preference to the endorsed Call system but with face to face/Skype interviews of shortlisted candidate/s prior to Call Meeting.

### Alternative Call Process

The top three call models different to the present Call system given the highest overall vote by congregations were first that congregations invite expression of interest from suitable pastors on advice of Bishop, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop; second that the congregation invites expression of interest from all pastors, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop; and third that the congregation sets criteria on advice of Bishop, advertises position to all pastors, invites applications, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop (*Table 45*).

*Table 45 The following models of the Call process are different to the present Call system. Tick up to 5 (or none) that would best suit your congregation*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations who believe model would suit their congregation |
| Congregation invites expression of interest from suitable pastors on advice of Bishop, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop | 59 |
| Congregation invites expression of interest from all pastors, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop | 53 |
| Congregation sets criteria on advice of Bishop, advertises position to all pastors, invites applications, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop | 50 |
| Congregation sets criteria, advertises position to all pastors, invites applications, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop | 41 |
| All pastors are assigned to a congregation for a set time by the Bishop after being assessed as to their suitability and needs of the congregation | 7 |
| All pastors are assigned to a congregation by the Bishop after being assessed as to their suitability and needs of the congregation | 5 |
| Congregation invites expression of interest from suitable pastors on advice of Bishop, interviews and then appoints without consulting the Bishop | 5 |
| Congregation sets criteria on advice of Bishop, advertises position to all pastors, invites applications, interviews and then appoints without consulting the Bishop | 5 |
| Congregation invites expression of interest from all pastors, interviews and then appoints without consulting the Bishop | 4 |
| Congregation sets criteria, advertises position to all pastors, invites applications, interviews and then appoints without consulting the Bishop | 2 |

Congregations in NSW were split between the two new models; first the congregation invites expression of interest from suitable pastors on advice of Bishop, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop and second the congregation invites expression of interest from all pastors, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop.

NZ congregations were equally in favour of two alternative models. First the model where the congregation invites expression of interest from all pastors, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop or second the congregation sets criteria, advertises position to all pastors, invites applications, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop.

Congregations in QLD, SA/NT and VIC/TAS gave first preference to the new model where the congregation invites expression of interest from suitable pastors on advice of Bishop, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop.

Congregations in WA first preference was for a model where the congregation invites expression of interest from all pastors, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop.

Congregations in rural, regional and suburban parishes all gave highest preference to the new model where a congregation invites expression of interest from suitable pastors on advice of Bishop, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop.

Inner city congregations gave their preference to the new model in which the Congregation invites expression of interest from all pastors, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop.

**More than one Model**

61% of congregations (60 congregations) agreed that more than one model of the Call process should be available to congregations (*Table 46*). This view was held most strongly in NZ (75% of congregations), QLD (72%) and NSW/ACT Districts (69%). Over 52% of rural and regional congregations also agreed as well as 55% of suburban congregations and 75% of inner city congregations.

Those who supported the use of more than one model regularly cited the need to recognize geographic, cultural and size differences between parishes. There was a need for flexibility and recognition of the growing diversity across congregations. Those who opposed the introduction of more than one model argued for consistency, uniformity, clarity and a level playing field. Both congregations and pastors were likely to be confused by increased complexity.

*Table 46 More than one model (n=100)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations who say Yes | Percent of congregations who say Yes |
| More than one model of the Call process should be available to congregations | 60 | 60.6 |
| Congregations should be able to choose the model which suits them best | 64 | 66 |
| Combinations of models should be available to the congregation | 55 | 56.7 |

Most congregations believed they should be able to choose the model which suits them best (66%; 64 congregations) (*Table 46*). This view was supported by 78% of congregations in QLD and by 77% of congregations in NSW/ACT. Over 60% of regional congregations also agreed along with 65% of rural and suburban congregations and 88% of inner city congregations. Most of those congregations who argued for choice still advocated working within a defined framework and with ongoing input from the Bishop. But they did believe that congregations know their own needs best, that they work differently and each offer up a distinctive set of dynamics. A number of congregations were conscious that any variation in the process should not disadvantage small, remote or poor congregations already struggling under the present system. It was important to remember that there were a lot of small, rural congregations and parishes within the LCA. Choice should prompt cooperation not increase competition.

**Combinations of Model**

Most also agreed that combinations of models should be available to the congregation (57%; 55 congregations) (*Table 46*). By District the strongest support was 69% of congregations in NSW/ACT and the lowest support in SA/NT where 50% agreed. By location 52% of regional and suburban congregations agreed along with 57% of rural congregations and 88% of inner city congregations. Again any support for combinations of models was predicated on ongoing consultation with the Bishop. A model based on a call for expressions of interest combined with other criteria as determined by the congregation in consultation with the Bishop was regularly mentioned.

**Open Comments on Models of the Call Process**

Finally in the closing comments of this section there was mention of the need for a more modern Call system, a 21st century process with strategies which better ministered to diverse and disparate congregations. For some the present Call process was haphazard and broken. Greater dialogue between Calling bodies and Call candidates was looked for. Pastors should be able to withdraw from availability for Call on application to the Bishop; tenure should be limited; information should be up to date and meaningful; local management of the process should be encouraged.

Rural parishes looked for equity and fairness; regional congregations had specific needs and required greater flexibility in the process; suburban congregations believed the present system was particularly destructive for small congregations; inner city congregations advised due diligence on the part of Calling bodies as early in the process as possible. While ideally led by the Holy Spirit the Call process could be a worrying and seemingly complex time for congregations no matter what process was in place.

**Section 3: Needs and Expectations of your Parish**

Most congregations looked to their pastor in the role of Pastor as Shepherd (99 congregations) followed by Pastor as Leader (82 congregations) (*Table 47*). Pastor as Leader was stronger in regional, suburban and inner city churches with Pastor as Shepherd stronger in rural parishes.

*Table 47 Role of Pastor*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations |
| Pastor as Shepherd | 99 |
| Pastor as Leader | 82 |
| Pastor as Partner | 60 |
| Pastor as Servant | 51 |
| Pastor as Employee | 16 |

**Core Attributes for Parish Ministry**

The core attributes looked for in a pastor included their Capacity for pastoral care – visitation, counselling as well as their Capacity for supporting ministry – coaching, mentoring, and equipping others (*Table 48*). Also important was the ability to build on existing programs and strengths of the congregation.

Among other attributes congregation in rural area were looking for an understanding of rural ministry, issues and challenges; regional and suburban congregations were looking for capacity for supporting ministry while inner city congregations looked for an understanding of inner city ministry, issues and challenges.

*Table 48 Core attributes for Parish Ministry*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Rank |  | Number of congregations |
| 1 | Capacity for pastoral care – visitation, counselling | 90 |
| 2 | Capacity for supporting ministry – coaching, mentoring, equipping others | 76 |
| 3 | Ability to build on existing programs and strengths of the congregation | 58 |
| 4 | Ability to work alongside congregational leaders | 57 |
| 5 | Capacity for innovation in worship/church programs | 48 |
| 6 | Ability to relate to and communicate with those outside the church community | 44 |

**Desirable Attributes for Parish Ministry**

Other desirable attributes looked for by all congregations included an ability to relate to and communicate with aged members of a congregation, the ability to relate to and communicate with young members of a congregation and an ability to educate and empower congregational members as leaders (*Table 49*).

*Table 49 Desirable attributes for Parish Ministry*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Rank  |  | Number of congregations |
| 1 | Ability to relate to and communicate with aged members of a congregation | 43 |
| 2 | Ability to relate to and communicate with young members of a congregation | 39 |
| 3 | Ability to educate and empower congregational members as leaders | 39 |
| 4 | Ability to relate to and communicate with those outside the church community | 37 |
| 5 | Ability to build on existing programs and strengths of the congregation | 32 |
| 6 | An understanding of modern society and empathy with alternative forms and ways of ‘doing church’ | 30 |

**Open Comments on the Needs and Expectations of your Parish**

The single most important area of ministry most often mentioned by congregations was public ministry – worship, preaching, teaching and evangelism.

Rural parishes also singled out pastoral care, intergenerational ministry, the empowering of members and the ability to bring church and community together. Regional parishes looked for the capacity for supporting ministry, the ability to work with schools and youth; strong leadership and outreach into the local community. Suburban congregations singled out mentoring, teaching, the ability to work alongside congregational leaders as well as the empowering of lay people for ministry. Inner city congregations mentioned innovation and creativity; long term commitment and leadership.

## Section 4: Retraining, Reskilling and Review of Pastors

**Continuing Education of Pastors**

Over 61% of congregations (62 congregations) suggested their pastor had undertaken continuing education/training (Table 50). This was true for 87% of congregations in Vic/Tas but only 39% of congregations in NSW/ACT.

Small, rural congregations had fewer pastors undertaking continuing education/training compared to large, inner city congregations.

Over 50% of congregations (51 congregations) were unsure whether their pastor had a continuing education plan (Table 50). 34% of congregations could confirm their pastor had a continuing education plan and for most (77%: 27 congregations) their pastor had shared his plan with them. Of those pastors who had a continuing education plan there was 100% support from their congregations.

*Table 50 Has your Pastor undertaken continuing education?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Yes | 62 | 61.4 |
| No | 13 | 12.9 |
| Don't know | 26 | 25.7 |
| Total | 101 | 100 |

The most common types of continuing education were in the areas of spiritual growth and formation, pastoral care and counselling, leadership and deeper theological studies (*Table 51*).

*Table 51 What type of continuing education did your pastor undertake?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations | Rank  |
| Spiritual growth and formation | 16 | 1 |
| Pastoral care and counselling | 14 | 2 |
| Leadership | 9 | 3 |
| Deeper theological studies | 9 | 3 |
| Church growth | 7 | 5 |
| Interfaith/ecumenical awareness | 7 | 5 |
| Preaching and worship | 6 | 7 |
| Death and bereavement support | 4 | 8 |
| Marriage guidance and counselling | 4 | 8 |
| Management and administration | 3 | 10 |
| Understanding different cultures | 3 | 10 |
| Pastoral ethics | 2 | 12 |
| IT skills | 2 | 12 |
| Team building | 2 | 12 |
| Understanding refugees | 1 | 13 |
| Parenting | 1 | 13 |

A significant majority of congregations (75%; 74 congregations) thought it was very important or important for their pastor to engage in continuing education (Figure 2). It was especially popular with medium sized and inner city congregations.

*Figure 2 How important is continuing education?*

The types of continuing education considered most beneficial to a congregation included pastoral care and counselling, church growth, spiritual growth and formation and team building.

*Table 52 What type of continuing education would be most beneficial to your congregation?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations | Rank  |
| Pastoral care and counselling | 65 | 1 |
| Church growth | 57 | 2 |
| Spiritual growth and formation | 50 | 3 |
| Team building | 38 | 4 |
| Preaching and worship | 35 | 5 |
| Leadership | 26 | 6 |
| Death and bereavement support | 18 | 7 |
| Deeper theological studies | 15 | 8 |
| Marriage guidance and counselling | 14 | 9 |
| Management and administration | 13 | 10 |
| Interfaith/ecumenical awareness | 13 | 10 |
| Understanding different cultures | 7 | 12 |
| IT skills | 7 | 12 |
| Pastoral ethics | 5 | 13 |
| Parenting | 4 | 14 |
| Understanding refugees | 1 | 15 |

Almost 80% of congregations (79 congregations) strongly agreed or agreed that it was appropriate to congregation to set aside time for their pastor to undertake continuing education/training and 66% (67 congregations) thought it appropriate to set aside money for the same purpose. Large and regional congregations were most supportive of these proposals.

**Review of Ministry**

Almost 60% of congregations (60 churches) had either not conducted a review of ministry within the last 5 years or were unsure. This applied most to congregations in WA and QLD, congregations which were small or inner city congregations.

Of those congregations who had conducted a review 75% had received support from the District (34 congregations) (Figure 3). This support primarily took the form of a document for the congregation to follow (Table 53). A number of congregations also had support from District staff assigned to lead them though the process.

*Figure 3 Was support for the review process provided by the District?*

*Table 53 Type of support provided by the District*

|  |
| --- |
| Number of Congregations |
| District supplied a document for us to follow | 22 |
| A pastor on District staff was assigned to lead us through the process | 13 |
| A pastor not on District staff was assigned to lead us through the process | 8 |
| Other | 5 |
| A layperson not on District staff was assigned to lead us through the process | 1 |

Congregations who did not use the LCA Review of Ministry Handbook had used a variety of other methods of review. Some had adopted an in house approach by means of a survey of all members, a review of the congregation, an interview, or a specially convened church committee. Others had brought in independent reviewers to speak with individuals and groups within the Parish. One had used the Uniting Church Review program. Another the Future Ministry Planning program.

There was mention that the LCA Review process was complicated and confusing and that the conducting of in house discussions produced better outcomes. Also that there was a need for all programs to be continually reviewed and adjusted.

For most of those congregations who conducted a Review of Ministry it was a positive experience. On a scale of 1 to 5 at least 88% of congregations (35 congregations) rated it as a 3 and for 85% (34 congregations) the objectives of the Review were met (Figure 4).

*Figure 4 Were the primary objectives of the Ministry Review met?*

Reasons as to why the primary goals of the Ministry Review were not achieved included a breakdown of the relationship between the Pastor and the Council and Elders and congregation. For others the questions were either vague or not relevant and so agreed outcomes were not achieved. Within one congregation the Review itself raised areas of difficulty which needed to be addressed but extenuating circumstances did not see this occur in a timely manner. Others did not follow through to complete the process and so received no feedback at all.

**Performance of Pastor**

For 30 (73.2%) of those congregations who did conduct a review the process did address the pastor’s personal performance and this was assessed primarily in confidence and with the Church Council (*Table 54*).

*Table 54 How was the pastor’s performance assessed?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations |
| In confidence | 15 |
| With Church Council | 12 |
| Other  | 10 |
| In consultation with church elders | 8 |
| With another pastor | 7 |
| With pastoral ministry team | 6 |
| One-on-one with church chairperson | 5 |
| With a mentor | 4 |
| With pastor’s family included | 3 |

Other ways in which the pastor’s performance was assessed included by other individuals such as the District Bishop or the Director of Care of an associated aged care facility who was not a member of the congregation or through the use of a congregational review committee. Some congregations used a survey of members followed up by discussions with the Church Executive and Church Council. Another a round table approach. One congregation used the original Call team which provided broad representation of all members.

The majority of those congregations who had conducted a review (69%; 29 congregations) agreed that every Review should be split into two parts (Table 55). The advantages of this were primarily greater clarity concerning the purpose of the review, better assessment of pastor and family wellbeing and greater support by the parish/congregation of pastor’s professional development (Table 56).

*Table 55 Should every Review be split into two parts?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Yes | 29 | 69 |
| No | 13 | 31 |
| Total | 42 | 100 |

*Table 56 Advantages of splitting the Review*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Number of congregations |
| Greater clarity concerning the purpose of the review | 19 |
| Better assessment of pastor and family wellbeing | 19 |
| Greater support by the parish/congregation of pastor’s professional development | 19 |
| Greater ownership of ministry goals by parish/congregation | 18 |
| Better self-accountability by parish/congregation | 16 |
| Better personal goal-setting by pastor | 14 |
| Greater support by the parish/congregation of pastor’s personal growth | 14 |
| Better self-accountability by pastor | 13 |
| Improved integration of congregational/parish goals and pastoral performance | 12 |
| Greater separation of congregational/parish goals and pastoral performance | 5 |
| Improved pastoral performance | 5 |
| Other  | 3 |

Other advantages for splitting the Review were mentioned. These included that such a split allowed the Review to concentrate on strengths rather than weaknesses and showed some support for interpersonal relationships. Some individual church circumstances also demanded a split review which in turn allowed a congregation to review and evaluate its ministry.

**Goals of the Review**

A majority of congregations who conducted reviews of ministry (59%: 24 congregations) had included the goals of their original Call documents to the pastor within the Ministry Review (Figure 5). For another 21% (9 congregations) this was not the case. A large majority of congregations (80%) had been informed that the Review was taking place. Under half of congregations, however, (42%: 17 congregations) were aware of the outcomes.

*Figure 5 Were the goals included in the original Call document part of the Ministry Review?*

Other suggestions for the Review of Ministry included questions such as did the Pastor feel supported, had new goals been developed with the Pastor during his time with the congregation and what was the vision and future direction of the congregation.

For almost half of congregations who conducted reviews there was no affirmation workshop (49%: 20 congregations) but most congregations involved in a review of ministry, 66% (27 congregations), believed the outcome of the review process had a very positive or positive effect on the relationship between pastor and congregation/pastor.

35% (14 congregations noted very few or few changes in the pastor’s practice of ministry as a result of the Review 28% (11 congregations) noted a number of changes.

A large majority of congregations (88%: 84 congregations) supported the pastor in the provision of a mentor with whom he could meet regularly. However support for an outside independent review was not quite so strong. Just over half of congregations (59%: 54 congregations) supported this concept (Figure 6).

*Figure 6 Support of an independent review process*

**Open Comments on Retraining, Reskilling and Review of Pastors**

Finally open comments on the review process included the necessity for it to be simple and non-threatening. That such reviews should aim to build up and support both pastors and congregations in open communication. Problems of distance were raised particularly between distant congregations within the same parish. Mention was made of the EOI models which would work well for attractive congregations e.g. urban centres, but could disadvantage others.

Some congregations were unaware of the resources available for ministerial review. Others felt that it would be difficult for an outside independent review process. With an internal process the congregation leadership has a better insight of their pastor. Others mentioned that disclosure by a pastor of their attitude to elements of a service such as liturgy, ceremony, hymns and robes and to visitation could be simply achieved but would be very helpful in assessing the potential fit of a pastor to a congregation. The suggestion was for a website for self-assessment which could provide congregations with a virtual introduction to pastors and perhaps be as informative as a trial sermon or a visit.

Others commented on the need for independence and suggested that parishioners may be reticent to speak frankly with a Church Council-oriented Review Panel. For most it was a positive experience. Individual congregations had experienced situations which were not the norm and hence their reviews were atypical. However they thought it still important to comment on the Review process. Others though a congregation led Review but with District collaboration would be most suitable.

Not all supported the idea of continuing education and further training which some believed should be undertaken in pastor’s own time.

### Summary

The majority view of respondents to the survey is that the Call process is inadequate but could be improved. The experience of almost one third of congregations does not match the endorsed Call process. Almost one third of congregations are dissatisfied and levels of dissatisfaction are highest in rural and regional congregations and parishes in NZ and NSW/ACT.

Most congregations believe they are adequately prepared for the Call process and that the District is supportive in the process. And they are satisfied with the quality of pastors available for call. Their major concern lies with the lack of meaningful and up to date information, most critically which pastors are genuinely interested in receiving a Call to a new parish or congregation. This issue is common across all Districts and locations.

For over 60% of congregations their first call is unsuccessful and this sets up a chain of delay in the process from which they struggle to recover. In order to advance the process a large majority of congregations wish to start the Call process earlier, that is immediately a pastor has accepted a Call.

Congregations are receptive to the concept of tenure and greater support of pastor and families. They also seek greater access to information around accrued leave and third party recommendations. Congregations too recognize the difficulty in meeting all needs and still have a robust process, particularly when the LCA has a shortage of pastors.

Most congregations are supportive of a continuing education plan for their pastor both in time and in money, though not all are sure of the details of the plan or of its execution. Most had included the goals of their original call document in their review. A large majority wished to see their pastor supported by means of a mentor.

If the Call process is to change, congregations wish to ensure equity and fairness and improved transparency across the LCA. The large majority support a uniform framework but within that most seek flexibility and a certain degree of independence, though predicated on support or advice from the Bishop. Seeking expressions of interest from either all pastors or suitable pastors is one change which has significant support. While rural and regional parishes may experience longer delays and more protracted vacancies than some suburban congregations their issues and concerns with the Call process match those across the LCA.

# 3 Results of the Interviews with Administrators of the LCA Call Process

### Introduction

In December 2017 each active and recently retired District Bishop and Director of Mission within the LCA was invited to participate in an interview concerning the LCA Call Process. The District Call Committee of the Vic/Tas District was also invited to participate via its Chair. The interviews were conducted in response to a resolution at the 2015 LCA General Convention where it was resolved that a review of the LCA Call process should be conducted.

The Interview questions on the LCA Call Process were drawn up and managed by the Australian Lutheran College (ALC) on behalf of the LCA under the supervision of Professor Wendy Mayer. The interviews were conducted between 16th January 2018 and closed on the 27th February 2018.

There were 31 questions on the Call Process broken up into 4 Sections based on the View of their Authority/Duty of Care and of the Call Process, Administering the Call Process, the Call Process, and Other Factors. Interviewees were sent the questions in advance and submitted a short written response to the questions in advance of the interview. The interviews focused on exploring the responses to some of the questions further. A saturation approach was taken, in which key issues that emerged received focus as the interviews progressed. Responses to the interviews were confidential and in reporting on the results no individual has been identified.

Because of the small number of individuals interviewed and the high risk of identification of responses, the results are reported in a general form only. The statistical nature of the responses is not entered into. Analysis was conducted in order to elicit general themes that emerged from the interviews.

### Interview responses

10 active and retired District Bishops responded to the request for interview, as did the District Call Committee of the Vic/Tas District. 100% of the LCA Districts were represented. The District Call Committee was represented by its Chair and 1 member. Respondents included all 3 Directors of Mission (Qld, Vic/Tas, and SA/NT Districts). A total 11 interviews were conducted.

### Section 1 View of authority/duty of care and of the Call Process

When asked to speak about their own view of the role of the Holy Spirit as well as human mechanisms in the Call Process, there was general agreement that the Holy Spirit sits at the heart of the process and works through human mechanisms that are open to alteration in accord with God’s will. When asked to assess how congregations/parishes view the Call Process, opinion varied. A majority felt that congregations view the Call Process as a human mechanism that the Holy Spirit works through. Some felt that increasingly congregations were coming to view the process as a human mechanism with which the Holy Spirit has little to do. Generally more optimistic views were expressed: that congregations share the view that the Holy Spirit is at work in the process, although it was also expressed that how congregations viewed the process could be quite varied.

When asked to speak about their authority, duty of care, and how directive they should be in the process, there was consensus that their role is that of guide to both pastors and congregations/parishes. Neither should be privileged or given priority in the process. Both need to be cared for. On the other hand, there is an emerging emphasis in some Districts that in the Call Process ‘the congregation is king’. Those with greater experience shared that their role involves a balancing act, in which they try to help both pastors and congregations/parishes find a good fit. This can sometimes involve the need to share information about a candidate, without breaking confidentiality, or to tap a pastor on the shoulder to consider moving on or consider a particular call. The majority shared that increasingly congregations/parishes are looking to them to provide information about pastors and their availability. Congregations/parishes increasingly have little knowledge of the pastors who are available for call and share their frustration with the quality of the information available. A difference was observed in small versus larger Districts with regard to the amount of care that could be exercised with regard to pastors and their families during and immediately after the Call Process. In smaller Districts this was seen as a joy and a privilege. In larger Districts the burden of administration can mean that the involvement in this process is less personal. This does not diminish its importance. Every attempt is made to offer support nonetheless. In the end, the primary concern in all of these factors is the wellbeing of pastor, congregation/parish, and most importantly the whole church.

Regarding the theology and history of the LCA Call Process the general opinion was that it reflects and supports the synodical character of the church and its trust in the work of the Holy Spirit (‘not my will, but your will, Lord’). The Call Process is quite different in this respect from a workplace employment process.

### Section 2 Administering the Call Process

Despite the increasing shortfall in pastors, administrators are not at present overly burdened with the number and frequency of calls. On self-assessment this constitutes on average no more than 5% of their workload. It depends, however, on the individual District. In one case the workload reported was as high as 20-30%. Of significance is the finding that the majority had little to no training for the role. Reliance is on on-the-job training, perhaps with some guidance by a predecessor, or some experience through assistant roles prior to taking on the role of bishop or Director of Mission. Some bishops expressed that, while congregations/parishes increasingly look to them to provide information about pastors, if they are relatively new in the role they may have little personal knowledge of the range of pastors on the roll of the LCA either. Directors of Mission and the District Call Committee (Vic/Tas) provide invaluable assistance in this regard. Directors of Mission expressed that, by virtue of their role, they had close knowledge of and good relationships with both congregations/parishes and pastors in their Districts. It also emerged that the 3 Directors of Mission work collaboratively and share information that may be of assistance to determining the fit of congregations/parishes and pastors across the Districts. Bishops currently also for the most part work collaboratively, with larger Districts concerned to help out smaller Districts where possible.

The District Call Committee (Vic/Tas) shared that they carry a significant workload in that they conduct the preliminary phone calls to pastors available for call to determine who would not be open to receiving a new call. Additionally, they chair call committee meetings as representatives of the bishop, and individually hold responsibility for the congregations/parishes within a particular zone. In regard to the experience of phoning pastors concerning their actual interest in a new call, they shared that increasingly pastors were saying ‘no’. In a recent case it took phone calls to some 12-15 pastors to locate 2 who were open to a new call. They also provided useful data concerning responses to calls by the bishop to all available pastors for expressions of interest. Despite the expectation by congregations/parishes that this process might offer a greater number of responses, the reality was that in some cases just 2 pastors responded, in others 0.

Smaller Districts reported that they had less experience of calling SMPs. Larger Districts reported that the time involved in the Call Process with regard to SMPs and Graduate Pastors (GPs) was significantly greater than that for general ministry pastors. On questioning, in the case of GPs this concerned less the actual process of calling a GP. Time was consumed in supervising and caring for the GP after installation. In some cases this program of supervision and care was said to be difficult to implement, particularly in rural and remote areas. The case of SMPs is similar. The workload leading up to the call is significant. The call itself is straightforward. In the case of neither SMP nor GP is it likely that the candidate will decline.

### Section 3 The Call Process

Generally it was agreed that the current Process needs change, but when questioned further, it emerged that the changes suggested were not substantial or that they concerned not the Process itself, but impact factors. The most commonly referenced impact factor was the number of available pastors; the second, the increasing lack of mobility of pastors. Broken down, ‘available pastors’ referred to both the overall number of pastors on the roster (the general quantity) and, of those, the number available for call once family and other factors impacting mobility were taken into account. There was disagreement as to whether timeliness was a factor. Some felt the Process was timely, some that it took as long as it needed to, others that there were inbuilt delays in the Process that meant that it took too long for a congregation to successfully call a pastor. Other factors mentioned were transparency and expectation management.

When expectation management was questioned, what was referenced was the practice of phoning pastors in advance to ask about their openness to receipt of a new call in order to reduce the list of candidates who were then approached for a more complete phone interview or placed onto the list presented to the parish call meeting. It was felt that this initial approach was seen as equivalent to current workplace employment practices. If a pastor with a high view of the pastorate said yes, then false expectation was raised that that pastor would say yes to a call, which might not at all be the case. There would then be a feeling of being let down on the part of the congregation/parish. A related issue was pastors who responded by saying that no, they weren’t open to a call because of their program of ministry in their current call, but who then accepted a call from a different congregation not long after. The practice of phoning pastors in an attempt to ‘cull the list’ down to pastors genuinely open to considering a new call was, from both angles, identified as problematic. This issue is closely aligned with transparency. The greatest dissatisfaction on the part of congregation/parishes reported concerned both the current practice of listing pastors on LAMP as available for call regardless of whether this was ‘real’ or only technical. The poor quality of pastor profiles was identified as an associated issue. Congregations/parishes were also said in some cases to have false expectations with regard to how long they would be vacant and how long it would take to successfully call a pastor.

On questioning it emerged that there were a number of variations to the standard process that were available to both administrators and congregations/parishes. Not all bishops were aware of all of them. These include the capacity for a bishop to release an open call for expressions of interest to pastors on the roll of the LCA. Alternatively, bishops can and do approach experienced general ministry pastors serving an existing call and ask them to prayerfully consider a new call in situations where it has proved difficult to call a pastor. This can be successful in cases where the pastor approached is close to retirement, the new call being the last before they retire. In regard to the phone calls by a call committee to pastors who are listed as available for call to ascertain their openness to considering a call to a particular congregation/parish, the District Call Committee (Vic/Tas) uses the reverse of the standard question (‘Is there a reason why you would not be open to a new call?’) rather than the standard question (‘Would you be open to a call?’). It was pointed out that this elicits less false positives. The District Call Committee also keeps a list of pastors they have phoned, the date, and their responses, to reduce the number of phone calls that are unproductive and ensure that this part of the Process is less of a burden on pastors.

There was general agreement that setting a term limit to a Call would be adverse. It was felt that this would compromise ministry programs or a pastor’s professional development. The by-laws of the LCA already encourage a bishop to have a conversation with a pastor who has been in a parish for a long time.

### Section 4 Other factors

When asked about what kinds of ministries had the greatest difficulty in calling a pastor, the general response was that there are three kinds of ministries that are adversely impacted: remote parishes, multi-staff parishes, and school ministries (school chaplaincies and parishes associated with schools). Increasingly rural parishes are being realigned and amalgamated, resulting in large 2-pastor parishes. At the same time large regional centres and urban congregations exist that require pastors able to work in teams with other pastors, lay church workers, and/or volunteers. Pastors are not being trained with these skills and those who have these skills are in short supply. Similarly in short supply are pastors with additional training in education. The problem of finding pastors open to moving to remote congregations/parishes remains constant. The smaller Districts or more remote regions of the LCA, where pastors and their families are less likely to have family support or established relationships, can be disadvantaged. On the other hand, the same Districts that are viewed as remote can benefit from the fact that the pastors attracted to ministry in them tend to be ‘entrepreneurial’, to actively engage with the local community, and to stay longer. This can offset the longer time it can take to fill a vacancy in these areas.

There was no general agreement about whether the skills that the 21st-century church requires of its pastors should be developed during pastoral training prior to ordination or as part of CEP after ordination. There was general agreement, however, that these skills were needed, if the LCA is to supply pastors to fill vacancies in the above key areas. The capacity of pastors to be flexible in ministry or adapt was raised, without discussion of how or when this capacity could or should be developed.

The emphasis pastors now place on their family’s needs, in some cases equal to their pastoral call, was raised as a factor that increasingly impacts openness to new calls and mobility. There was reference to an emerging language among some pastors of a ‘call to family’. Increasing house ownership by pastors in response to a need to provide retirement security was also raised as a factor impacting mobility.

The Call Process is an educational process. In congregations there can be a large number of people who have never gone through a Call Process or it has been a long time since they last went through a Call Process and much has changed. This is an opportunity for the church to explain why it does what it does and why this differs from workplace employment processes. It is also an opportunity to engage with deep prayer and discernment of God’s will rather than our own.

Across the interviews, the individuality and diversity of the Districts of the LCA were highlighted and affirmed. The fact that New Zealand is a separate country, with a separate welfare, wage and school system is significant. The kinds of congregations/parishes that pastors serve across the LCA can vary significantly. This is both a joy and a challenge.

Other factors raised were:

* the rising age of graduate pastors relative to a system that expects mobility and on-the-job experience across a number of Districts and types of ministry
* increased time spent administering calls that fail for varied reasons (e.g. health of the pastor/family, culture shock, tensions between pastor and parish)
* social/cultural attitudinal change on the part of both pastors and congregations/parishes
* the need to think more creatively about ministry (a pluriform ‘ministry’ that includes lay evangelists, lay preachers, chaplains ordained as SMPs with either sacramental or preaching training or both, specifically trained ‘church planting’ workers)
* the need for training for auxiliary ministries, pathways for young people into ministries, training for mission, training for the role of bishop, plus training congregations/parishes in a ministry of welcome for the new pastor
* whether the capacity for a bishop to assign a non-graduate pastor (GMP) to a parish be added to the Call Process (a formalisation of the current occasional practice of a bishop approaching a desirable general ministry pastor, relying on their assent due to the work of the Holy Spirit, then approaching the congregation to encourage them to call that particular pastor)
* a change in attitude among graduate pastors towards assignment by the College of Bishops (issues of pastoral vocation and obedience)
* that some pastors view themselves as perfected in ordination and not subject to regular review processes or to continuing development.

### Conclusions

The interviews highlighted the need to distinguish between the Call Process itself (what works and doesn’t work) and the factors external to the Call Process that impact it (that can or can’t be changed). When pressed on the question of the Process requiring change, in the majority of cases the factors raised proved to be impact factors. Transparency and the frustration that surrounds this was the one factor internal to the Call Process. The question of timeliness, if considered an issue, relates also to the Call Process itself.

Current bishops and Director of Mission work collaboratively with a view to the fit between pastor and congregation/parish and the wellbeing of the whole church. Care for both pastors and congregations/parishes is foremost in their minds as they administer the Call Process. They generally report satisfaction with the foundation of the current Call Process. It is centred in the work of the Holy Spirit through human beings and their processes. They generally believe, however, that it could be improved. When pressed on this issue improvements related on the whole to the need to address three impact factors (the mobility of pastors, the supply of pastors, the pastoral skill set relative to parish and school needs).

Bishops and Directors of Mission reported that the two qualities or skill sets most needed in pastors and that impacted their capacity to locate pastors suited to the parishes most difficult to supply are: flexibility, and training for team ministry.

The Call Process of the LCA already allows for a variety of practices: an open call via the bishop for expressions of interest by pastors; bishops tapping a pastor in a current Call on the shoulder and asking them to consider a vacant parish that is challenging; parishes asking pastors available for Call whether there are reasons they would not consider a new Call (the opposite of the current standard question); having a dedicated group of lay volunteers doing the phoning around on behalf of parishes and maintaining a check list of who has been approached and who has indicated genuine interest in being in receipt of a new call (current practice in the Vic/Tas District). Neither bishops nor Directors of Mission were aware of the full range of variants available. Bishops and Directors of Mission learn on the job (usually after minimal briefing from a predecessor).

# 4 Conclusions

## General conclusions

The Call Process in the LCA is at present under some stress. This is due to three main factors: the declining mobility of pastors, a small shortfall in the current supply of pastors, and the skill set of the pastors currently available relative to the needs of parishes. An additional factor pertaining to the Call Process itself continues to be transparency. A possible minor factor is the timeliness of the Call Process.

In the next 5-11 years the Call Process will come under significantly greater stress through a substantial increase in the retirements of pastors. The data concerning this is presented in a supplementary document **The Supply of Pastors in the Lutheran Church of Australia 2018-2029** presented to GCC. As the supply of fully-trained pastors (general ministry pastors = GMPs) rapidly shrinks, this single factor will place the greatest stress in coming years on both pastors and parishes.

The impact of the supply of pastors on the Call Process is compounded by the lack of pastors with the required skill sets for certain types of parish/ministry. The increasing lack of mobility of pastors is another key factor. Three types of parish are currently difficult to supply: remote parishes, multi-staff parishes, and school ministries (school chaplaincies and parishes associated with schools).

In both Survey and Interviews the individuality and diversity of the Districts of the LCA were highlighted and affirmed. The fact that New Zealand is a separate country, with a separate welfare, wage and school system is significant. The kinds of congregations/parishes that pastors serve across the LCA can vary significantly. Supply of pastors to accommodate the diversity of the parishes of the LCA and its Districts is thus a compounding factor. As the median age of pastors entering the Roll of Pastors increases, their exposure to the diversity of the church and capacity to gain hands-on experience across a range of different parish types/ministries and different Districts declines significantly. SMPs by definition have no exposure to this diversity. This has flow-on effects for the future leadership of the LCA and its Districts. It has major implications for the future training of pastors.

Parishes on the whole believe that the Call Process is inadequate but could be improved (rather than replaced). The deepest level of frustration for parishes pertains to transparency and timing: the status of pastor profiles, the delay in receipt of negative responses by pastors to an issued Call, and the real status of pastors in relation to availability for Call. Transparency had already been noted as a key factor in the report **Pastoral Ministry in the Lutheran Church of Australia** (April 2016), Recommendation 17. Delay and Availability for Call status are factors impacted by the supply and mobility of pastors.

Bishops and Directors of Mission generally report satisfaction with the current Call Process, but indicate that it could be improved. When pressed on this issue improvements related on the whole to the need to address the three impact factors listed above (mobility, supply, skill set relative to parish needs).

Bishops and Directors of Mission reported that the two skill sets most needed in pastors and that impacted their capacity to locate pastors suited to the parishes most difficult to supply are: flexibility, and training for team ministry. This is impacted by the current training of pastors in the LCA, which is designed to produce pastors who serve as sole pastor of a congregation of approximately 100 members, and have a general skill set. While pastors do seek professional development after ordination, there is no mandatory regular review process or mandatory professional development program. Parishes for the most part value and desire this. At present it is up to individual pastors (alone or in consultation with their congregations/parishes) to discern what further training they might require or desire. There is no guarantee that the skills for which they do seek further training match those that the LCA most urgently requires.

The Call Process of the LCA already allows for a variety of practices: an open call via the bishop for expressions of interest by pastors; bishops tapping a pastor in a current Call on the shoulder and asking them to consider a vacant parish that is challenging; parishes asking pastors available for Call whether there are reasons they would not consider a new Call (the opposite of the current standard question); having a dedicated group of lay volunteers doing the phoning around on behalf of parishes and maintaining a check list of who has been approached and who has indicated genuine interest in being in receipt of a new Call (current practice in the Vic/Tas District). Neither parishes nor bishops and Directors of Mission are aware of the full range of variants available. Bishops and Mission Directors learn on the job (usually after minimal briefing from a predecessor); parishes learn from the documentation provided by their District Office and from the administrator/s in that District of the Call Process. A number of respondents to the survey reported that the outline of the Call Process provided at the beginning of Section 2 of the Survey was the first time that they had gained a clear understanding of the Call Process.

In the report **Pastoral Ministry in the Lutheran Church of Australia** (April 2016), Recommendation 18 called for clarity and communication of ‘the roles and prerogatives of congregation and District leadership in the call process’. This was in response to a perception in 2015 that bishops and District officials had too much influence in the Call Process. Since 2015 3 new bishops have come into office in Qld, WA, Vic/Tas (the changeover in the NSW District occurred after the census date for the current study). As a result the situation has changed. In the current survey 70% of congregations reported that the District was supportive. In interview with the bishops and Directors of Mission it was clear that in 2018 100% of the bishops and Directors of Mission work collaboratively to supply pastors for parishes across the LCA and locate the needs of the parish as well as the pastor at the centre of the Call Process.

In an environment in which lay people no longer have a broad personal knowledge of active pastors, that knowledge rests with the administrators of the Call Process. Optimal function of the Call Process requires that District bishops work collaboratively and the individuals who know the pastors and parishes best are closely engaged as consultants in its administration. Those individuals are the Directors of Mission in each District.

Expectation management is important for the Call Process to function well and for the reduction of levels of mistrust and frustration.

In regard to potential changes to the Call Process, there was overwhelming rejection by lay people, bishops and Directors of Mission of limiting the term of Call, even with the allowance for extension. There was also little enthusiasm for introducing formal interviews of shortlisted candidates or trial sermons prior to a Call meeting.

To sum up:

* God is at the centre. The system works if people of faith (pastors and congregations) place trust in it (the Holy Spirit is genuinely at work, God is at the centre). It fails when it deteriorates into considerations of human will and desire on the part of both pastors and congregations.
* The LCA is a synodical church. The congregation is the focus of the Call Process and its needs are paramount.
* The LCA is a diverse church. Its Districts have different challenges and needs. We need to supply pastors and church workers who meet the full range of needs. That diversity includes a range of Lutheran theologies, pieties, and migrant cultures.
* The LCA needs missional, adaptable pastors, with a team-ministry mindset (pastors who are ready and able to work together with other pastors, multi-staff teams, lay leaders, and volunteers).
* The system itself is as a whole suits current LCA ecclesiology and theology. Frustrations lie with the length of time the system takes, transparency and quality of information available, with the quantity of pastors available, and the level of match between the pastors available and the types of parishes. There are issues with the care and formation of graduate pastors and with how to exit pastors gracefully, where needed.
* The issues involved are not a matter of theology, but of culture and practice.
* The formation of pastors sits at the heart of the church’s needs.
* Two types of changes in attitude have taken place in Australian culture over the past 40 years. An attitudinal change in pastors, who in essence now place the career of their spouse and their children’s needs equal to their call to ministry or above it. An attitudinal change in congregations, who are now more self-determined.
* Parishes no longer know pastors personally or have much of an idea of who they are and so are increasingly reliant for advice on those who administer the process or on personal profiles, phone interviews, etc – all of which create frustrations about transparency and completeness of information.
* Consistency across Districts of hospitality towards pastors who accept a Call is important.
* The purchase of housing by pastors as a result of anxieties about retirement security is significantly affecting pastor mobility. It puts pressure on spouses to work, which further reduces mobility.
* In the past we assumed that pastors would gain experience on the job over a 30-40 year career in the church. The increasing age of graduate pastors means that we now have pastors with a less diverse range of experiences, and who may not gain the experience in the field that we assume.

## Implications

It is helpful to remind ourselves of the centrality of God and the Holy Spirit in the Call Process.

Pastors and bishops need to engage in reflection around the theology of the Call to Ministry in relation to the increasing language of call to family and the declining of Calls that are incompatible with a spouse’s aspirations or aspirations for one’s children. Does Lutheran theology allow for this? Is there a discussion that is required here around the bondage of the will?

The LCA needs to find creative ways to mitigate against cultural factors that impede the mobility of pastors.

The LCA needs to look at the formation of its pastors and its training processes.

The Process is highly vulnerable to the individual personalities of its administrators. As stresses on the Call Process grow, the future wellbeing of the LCA requires that its District bishops each work collaboratively with the Directors of Mission and other District bishops to match the declining pool of pastors with parishes as optimally as possible, allowing for the work of the Holy Spirit within the Call Process. This requires intentional monitoring by lay people and pastors that candidates for election as bishop continue to be presented who are moderate in their theological position. A single bishop who is authoritarian or directive or overly protective of his own District will add to the stresses impacting the Process.

The 80+ Lutheran schools are considered the mission field of the church. This does not include the 50+ early childhood centres run by the LCA and its parishes, which provide mission opportunity. Close attention needs to be given to supplying pastors with the necessary skills to work in the school and early childhood environment. The declining pool of pastors places this important ministry in jeopardy.

## Potential further studies

Compilation of complete data on the mobility of pastors across Districts and across types of ministries relative to exposure during training. Investigation of whether the perception that pastors have become less mobile over time is supported by the data. If mobility has declined over time, more precise determination and ranking of causal factors.

A survey of active pastors who own their own houses to determine whether they owned the property before entering the Roll of Pastors or bought it when they accepted a Call to the parish, and to determine whether occupier ownership impedes mobility. Conduct a corresponding survey of parishes who have sold or rented out their manses to determine whether this has affected the response of a pastor to a Call and their capacity to welcome the new pastor. If house ownership is determined to impede mobility and/or hospitality, look at models for improving the mobility of pastors through a centralised house-swap or rental program.

# Appendix 1: Survey questions and instructions

This survey is being distributed in response to a resolution adopted at the 2015 LCA General Convention where it was resolved that a review of the LCA Call process should be conducted. The review aims to identify and examine potential new models for filling pastoral vacancies with a view to increasing efficiency, transparency and inclusion. An important part of the review is to consult with congregations. To this end a survey of all congregation within the LCA is being conducted in association with focus groups and interviews. All of the research, under the supervision of Professor Wendy Mayer, Associate Dean for Research at Australian Lutheran College (ALC), has been approved by an Ethics Committee. The anonymity of all participating congregations is assured. All primary data will be viewed solely by the researchers named in the ethics clearance and stored securely within the Australian Lutheran College. All results from the survey will be reported in summary form only and in such a way that the identity of congregations cannot be deduced. An analysis of the results of the survey will inform a report submitted to GCC, from which one or more recommendations will be presented to the 2018 General Synodical Convention.

This is an opportunity for the lay people of the Lutheran Church of Australia to have a voice. While participation is optional, we value your response and hope that you will take up the opportunity to share your experiences, observations, and opinions. The questions invite opinions on the Call process from *all* LCA congregations. They include situations in which the Call has resulted in the assignment of a Graduate Pastor or a Specific Ministry Pastor.

The survey consists of 93 questions and will take up to 1 hour to complete. The majority of the questions refer to your last experience of calling a Pastor to your congregation. It is suggested that the survey be answered by someone who has had responsibility for such a call, for example a Chair of a Congregation or of a Call Committee. In responding to the questions, we encourage you to consult with members of your Church Board/Council/Committee and/or most recent Call Committee.

The survey should be filled in on line. A pdf copy of the questionnaire, however, can be printed off from the web site of the survey and shared via email or in print form. This should allow for consultation on the questions across a committee or church board.

The survey is in 4 sections:

* **Section 1** asks questions about your parish and/or congregation.
* **Section 2** explores your experience of the Call process. It focuses on four areas of the Call process: levels of information, timing, and transparency, and care for the pastor and congregation. Section 2 also sets out the endorsed general Call process within the LCA as well as the process for SMP or graduate assignment and asks you to consider a range of alternative models. These are in two lists: the first suggests models close to the present general process, the second significantly different approaches. Responses to this section are an important focus of the survey.
* **Section 3** considers the needs and expectations of your congregation with regard to pastoral ministry.
* **Section 4** asks questions about the retraining, reskilling and review of pastors. Sections 3 and 4 are not strictly related to the Call process, but provide important context. Section 4 addresses an area of importance for pastor and congregation profiles and transparency.

In some of the sections we use the term ‘parish’, which is the official calling body, according to the endorsed LCA Call process. A parish can consist of a single congregation or more than one congregation. Since different congregations in the same parish can be of different characters and hold different opinions, we ask that you answer all questions from the perspective of your own congregation.

Most of the questions offer a limited range of responses. However there are a number of ‘open’ questions where answers are not restricted.

If you are unsure of an answer to a question or don’t know the answer to a question please leave it blank.

If your experience of the Call process lies outside what is described within this survey, please contact the researchers directly at alc@alc.edu.au or (08) 7120200

Before you enter the survey, please answer the following question:

Do the responses to the survey represent the consensus view of your church council/call committee? Yes/No

If No, please explain.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Section 1 Your Parish**

1. In your congregation, you represent

The chair of the Congregation

The chair of the Call Committee of the congregation

Other (please state)

1. Have you served on a Call committee within the past 10 years? *Yes/No*
2. Your parish is currently served by (tick all that apply; indicate how many; indicate FTE). FTE refers to full-time equivalency. E.g. 1.0 = full-time, 0.5 = half-time.

A pastor you secured through a general call

A Specific Ministry Pastor

A Graduate Pastor

Other (explain)

1. Does your pastor/s serve *tick one*

A single congregation

A parish with two congregations

A parish with three or more congregations

Other (explain)

1. If your parish contains more than one congregation how different are the congregations in how they need to be served? *tick one*

Very different

Different

Not different

Don’t know

1. How long since your congregation was last vacant? *tick one*

Less than 12 months

12 – 18 months

18 months – 2 years

2 – 5 years

5 – 10 years

More than 10 years

We are currently in a vacancy

If you answered **We are currently in a vacancy** please go to Q7 Otherwise go to Q8.

1. If you are currently in a vacancy

How long has your parish been vacant? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/

In the next 2 years do you anticipate being able to find a full time pastor? Yes/No

In the next 5 years do you anticipate being able to find a full time pastor? Yes/No

If you answered **No** to anticipating being able to find a full time pastor in the next 2 years AND in the next 5 years please explain your answer

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

1. Approximately what percentage of your congregation is aged?

Under 10 years \_\_\_\_%

10 to 20 years

20 to 30 years

30 to 50 years

50 to 70 years

70 years or over

1. What is the cultural/ethnic mix of your congregation (both worshipping and actively cared for)? *Tick any that apply.* Please indicate approximate percentage

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Pacific Islander

Australian born

Maori

New Zealand born

Scandinavian

European

African

SE Asian

Korean

Chinese

*Middle Eastern*

*E*thnically diverse

Other please state

1. In your congregation worship services are held in which of the following languages? *tick any that apply*

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Maori or Polynesian

 English

 German

 Finnish

 Sudanese

 Chinese

 Korean

 Vietnamese

 Auslan sign language

 Other please state

1. In terms of average weekly attendance, would you best describe your current congregation as...? *tick one*

Small (less than 100 in worship)

Medium (100-200 in worship)

Large (more than 200 in worship)

1. In which state/region is your congregation? *tick one*

ACT

New South Wales

New Zealand (north island)

New Zealand (south island)

Northern Territory

Queensland

South Australia

Tasmania

Victoria

Western Australia

Other

1. In which Local Government Area (LGA) is your congregation? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. How would you best describe your congregation’s location? *tick one*

Rural / small town

Regional centre

Suburban

Inner city

**Section 2 LCA Call Process**

This section sets out first the endorsed general LCA Pre-Call and Call meeting process as well as the endorsed assignment process for Graduate Pastors and Specific Ministry Pastors (SMPs). Note that these processes are ideal and not necessarily followed exactly in practice. Next you are asked about your overall view of the Call process. This is followed by questions around the timing, levels of information and transparency associated with the Call process. Finally you are asked to consider a number of alternative Call methods.

In summary the endorsed general LCA Call process is as follows

Pre-Call process

* Parish is declared vacant
* Parish identifies its main goals, and pastor attributes
* Parish sets up a Call Committee
* Parish approaches the Bishop for identification of candidates
* Committee is sent list of ALL pastors available for Call (with picture, ID, current general information)
* Committee narrows the list to approximately 6 candidates
* Committee contacts District Office with list
* District Office provides the detailed information (confidential self-assessment) for each candidate
* Committee narrows the list to approximately 3 candidates
* Committee arranges a date for a Call Meeting with the Bishop/his representative

Call Meeting process

* Parish meeting is arranged with Bishop or his representative in attendance
* Voting takes place by exhaustive vote
* Candidates are ranked (1,2,3)
* The Call Letter is signed
* The Bishop phones candidate no. 1 as soon as possible following the Call Meeting
* The Call Letter is sent through the District
* The Call is made public
* The candidate has 4 weeks from the time of receiving the Call letter to consider the Call
* The candidate accepts or declines. If he declines, and if candidates no. 2 and 3 are still available for Call, the Call is issued to them by order of preference.. Alternatively, the parish may choose to hold another Call meeting to add to or change the list of prospective candidates. If so, the pre-Call process is re-entered.
* If no. 1 declines and no. 2 and 3 are no longer available, the pre-Call process is re-entered.

In summary the endorsed LCA assignment process is as follows. In both cases the meeting at which a parish votes to ask for an assignment is deemed a Call meeting.

Assignment of Graduate Pastor

* Parish calls a meeting and votes to approach the District Bishop to request that a Graduate Pastor be appointed
* Application is made to the College of Bishops via the District Bishop
* The College of Bishops identifies a suitable Graduate Pastor and provides information to the parish
* The graduate is assigned to the parish with a minimum 4 year call, with a review of their ministry occurring in year 2

Or

Assignment of SMP

* Parish calls a meeting and votes that application be made for the candidate to be ordained as an SMP to serve them
* Parish prepares an application to District Bishop and District Church Council (DCC) to ask that an SMP be appointed
* Parish works with Bishop or his representative to identify a suitable SMP candidate
* The College of Bishops receives a request from the District Bishop for the candidate to enter the SMP program
* Once approved, the candidate is generally licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry for 12 months, while also preparing for ordination
* When the District Bishop and parish are satisfied with the development of the SMP an application for ordination is submitted to the College of Bishops
* Once ordination is approved, and the candidate ordained, a Call with specific conditions is issued

As you answer the following questions, keep in mind that

* the current LCA by-Laws state:

*Practices such as preaching trial sermons, pastors making approaches to congregations for a call, congregations or committees, or individual members making approaches to a pastor prior to a call shall not be resorted to in connection with call procedures (5.4.6)*

* under current LCA policy a pastor can receive more than one Call at a time.
1. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement: The endorsed LCA Call process matches our actual experience of the Call process

Strongly disagree …… Strongly agree

1. Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion about your experience of the Call process? Tick one
* The process works very well
* The process is adequate but could be improved
* The process is inadequate but could be improved
* The process is inadequate and needs to be replaced
1. Which best represents your view on the Call process. *tick one*
* I believe the Holy Spirit is the primary mover in the Call process.
* I believe the Call process is largely a human mechanism but that the Holy Spirit can work through it.
* I believe the Call process is entirely a human mechanism and has no more to do with the Holy Spirit than any other human organisational decision.
* I believe the Call process is a human innovation and can be altered to suit contemporary needs and situations of church bodies.
* Other
1. Please indicate whether you disagree or agree with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5.

Overall I am satisfied with the Call process.

 Strongly disagree \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Strongly Agree

The district office was supportive in the process.

Strongly disagree \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Strongly Agree

I feel the process occurs in a timely manner.

Strongly disagree \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Strongly Agree

The process is rushed.

Strongly disagree \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Strongly Agree

The process is slow.

Strongly disagree \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Strongly Agree

We received all the information we needed.

Strongly disagree \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Strongly Agree

1. Would a regularly updated online training package for the Call Process be of benefit to your congregation? *Yes/No*

***If your pastor was assigned (i.e. is a Graduate Pastor or SMP) please go to Q32***

1. Were you adequately prepared as a congregation to undertake your last call? *Yes/No*

Ifyou answered **No** tick any that apply

* Had not called a pastor in a long time.
* Could not find the right information.
* Could not get a Call committee together.
* The process had changed.
* Other (explain)
1. How many pastors did the Call committee consider at its first meeting? \_\_
2. How many pastors were on your final Call list? \_\_
3. Was your Call to candidate 1 successful? Yes/No. If yes, go to Q 27
4. If candidate 1 declined, did you Call the next candidate on your reserve list? *Yes/No* Was this successful? *Yes/No* If no, go to Q 25. If yes, go to Q 27
5. Did you convene another Call meeting to draw up a new list? *Yes/No*
6. How many times did you have to go through the pre-Call process before a pastor accepted your call/your pastor was assigned? \_\_

**Information**

1. The following is a list of information which may or may not have been available to you by the time of your **first Call committee meeting**. Please indicate what information was **most** important to have by the time of your first Call committee meeting and what information was actually available to you.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Information most important ***tick up to 4*** | Information actually available ***tick any*** ***that apply*** |
| Names of all pastors eligible for Call  |  |  |
| Names of pastors already in receipt of a Call |  |  |
| Names of pastors not interested in receiving a Call |  |  |
| Names of pastors interested in receiving a Call |  |  |
| Up to date service information about pastors – current place of service, length of time in existing parish, previous places of service, etc  |  |  |
| Up to date personal information about pastors – age, recent education, family at home, etc |  |  |
| Other |  |  |

1. The following is a list is information sources which may or may not have been available to you for your **first Call meeting**. Please indicate what information sources were **most** important to have by the time of your first Call meeting and what sources were actually available to you.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Information sources most important ***tick up to 5*** | Information sources actually available ***tick any that apply*** |
| Information from the District |  |  |
| Information from the Bishop |  |  |
| Confidential up to date LAMP information |  |  |
| Personal witness from Call committee  |  |  |
| Personal witness from congregation |  |  |
| Personal witness from candidates’ existing parishioners |  |  |
| Skype interview with candidates |  |  |
| Phone interview with candidates |  |  |
| Personal interview with candidates |  |  |
| Trial sermon by candidate |  |  |
| Visit by candidate to congregation |  |  |
| Visit to candidates’ congregation |  |  |
| Other |  |  |

1. The following is a list of information which may or may not have been available to you **before you issued your call**. Please indicate what information was **most** important for you to know before you issued your Call and how much you actually knew.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Information most important ***tick up to 5***  | Information actually known ***tick any that apply*** |
| The pastor was available for call |  |  |
| The pastor was already in receipt of a call |  |  |
| The pastor was not interested in receiving a call |  |  |
| Age |  |  |
| Years in ministry |  |  |
| Years in existing parish |  |  |
| Size of existing parish |  |  |
| Strengths in ministry |  |  |
| Family size & ages of children |  |  |
| Health of pastor |  |  |
| Accrued leave |  |  |
| Ongoing training/ extra-curricular education  |  |  |
| Interests |  |  |
| Any special needs/requirements of the pastor or partner or family |  |  |
| Partner’s career and mobility |  |  |
| Other |  |  |

1. What else would you have liked to know? Open Question

**Timing**

1. In your experience which of the following creates the **most** delay in the pre-Call/Call process? *tick up to 6*
* Waiting for the pastor to vacate the parish before beginning the pre-Call process.
* Setting up a representative Call committee from the congregation
* Waiting for the Bishop to respond with names of all candidates available for call
* Arranging suitable times for the Call committee to meet
* Reading through Call materials
* Writing the Call documents
* Waiting for the District Office to respond with LAMP information
* Contacting candidates prior to the Call meeting
* Arranging a suitable time with the Bishop and congregation for the Call meeting
* Giving the congregation 2 weeks’ notice of the Call meeting
* Waiting for the Bishop to contact a candidate
* Waiting 4 weeks to hear from a candidate
* Other please state
1. When should the Call process start? *tick one*
* When a pastor announces they have accepted a Call to serve elsewhere
* When a pastor vacates a parish
1. Which of the following is closest to your opinion about the current 4-week period from receipt of Call document given to respond to a call? *tick one*
* 4 weeks is too long
* 4 weeks is the right length of time
* 4 weeks is too short
1. Calculating from the time your previous pastor vacated the parish/congregation until your current pastor accepted your Call, how long did the Call process take? Please be as accurate as possible in your estimation.

Less than 6 months

6 to 12 months

1 year

18 months

2 years

3 years

More than 3 years

Don’t remember

1. Do you have any other comments on timing? (open question) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Transparency**

1. Please answer the following with regard to the existing LCA Call system.
* The Call process favours the calling bodies. *Yes/No*
* The Call process favours pastors. *Yes/No*
* Bishops and district officials have too much influence within the present Call system. *Yes/No*
* Bishops and district officials should have more influence in the Call system. *Yes/No*
1. How satisfied were you with the quality of pastors made available for Call on a scale of 1 to 5?

Very dissatisfied \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Very satisfied

1. Overall the confidential information available through LAMP is adequate for purpose *Yes/No*
2. Should congregations be able to place the name of any pastor on their list of candidates? *Yes/No*
3. Should pastors only be able to receive 1 Call at a time? *Yes/No*
4. Should a congregation know their pastor has been approached for a call? *Yes/No*
5. Should all shortlisted candidates know the outcome of a Call Meeting? *Yes/No*
6. Part of the Call process may involve a pre Call phone conversation with candidates in which they are asked a hypothetical question as to whether *‘there any reasons … why you would not give serious consideration to a call’.* As part of the Call process has this question, when asked of candidates, been …..*tick any that apply*
* Helpful
* Confusing
* Useful
* Difficult
* Easy
* Redundant
* A waste of time
1. How important is it for ALLLCA parishes to follow precisely the same Call process on a scale of 1 to 5?

Very unimportant \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Very important

1. How important is it for ALL LCA districts to follow precisely the same Call process on a scale of 1 to 5?

Very unimportant\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Very important

1. Should a congregation know how much recreation leave/ long service leave a pastor to whom they are about to issue a Call has accrued? *Yes/No*
2. How important is information about a pastors family circumstances to the Call process on a scale of 1 to 5?

Very unimportant \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Very important

1. Should information about a pastor’s family circumstances or that of their partner become a formal part of the Call Process? *Yes/No*
2. Which of the following views do you agree with? *tick any that apply*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pastors should let the bishop in their current District know if they are interested in a call. |  |
| Pastors should let the bishop of the District in which a parish is vacant know if they are interested in a call |  |
| An interview before a Call meeting between the Call committee and potential candidates is a good idea. |  |
| Members of a Call committee should visit the current congregation of a potential candidate. |  |
| Congregations should have the option of inviting a single preferred candidate for a visit before the Call meeting. |  |
| Congregations should have the option of inviting a single preferred candidate for a visit and ‘trial sermon’ before the Call meeting. |  |

1. If the LCA supplied set criteria linked to the Call Process and controlled access to the site, what is your view on a scale of 1 to 5 of an online ‘Rate my Pastor’ website?

Very bad idea \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Very good idea

1. If the LCA supplied set criteria linked to the Call Process and controlled access to the site, what is your view on a scale of 1 to 5 of an online ‘Rate my Congregation’ website, for use of and updated by pastors?

Very bad idea \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Very good idea

1. Do you have any other comments with regard to transparency within the Call process? (open question)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Care for the Pastor, care for the Parish**

1. Should there be support available for the pastor/family of the pastor receiving the Call during the decision-making process? Yes/No. If Yes, should the support be provided by (*tick any that apply*)

the District,

the parish issuing the call

the parish the pastor currently serves

other (explain)

1. There is currently no term-limit on a pastor’s call. Pastors can remain at parishes for long periods for various reasons. At the same time, an argument could be made that, since some parishes experience extended vacancies, the gifts of pastors should be shared equally around the church. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:

ALL pastors should be required to move parish after a set length of time, with no extension allowed;

Strongly Disagree \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Strongly Agree

ALLpastors should be required to move parish after a set length of time, with one extension (in negotiation with parish and District bishop) allowed.

Strongly Disagree \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Strongly Agree

1. Do you have any other comments with regard to care for the pastor or parish within the Call process? (open question)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Models of the Call Process**

1. The following models of the Call process are based on the present process. *tick up to 5 (or none) that you think would best suit your congregation*
* Endorsed Call system as outlined above
* Endorsed Call system but Bishop speaks to pastors to determine interest before submitting names to Call Committee
* Endorsed Call system but shortlisted candidate/s visits the congregation prior to Call Meeting
* Endorsed Call system but shortlisted candidate/s give trial sermon prior to Call Meeting
* Endorsed Call system but with standardized phone interviews with shortlisted candidate/s prior to Call Meeting
* Endorsed Call system but with face to face/Skype interviews of shortlisted candidate/s prior to Call Meeting
* Endorsed Call system but all pastors must be available for Call after 3 years with the expectation of moving parish after a set period of tenure (e.g. 6 years) with a possible extension of 3 years negotiable
* Endorsed Call system but pastors nominate themselves to go into a pool of available pastors. This list is made available to Call committees by Bishop from which a short list is drawn up prior to Call Meeting.
* Ministry graduates go through the same Call process as all other pastors.
1. The following models of the Call process are different to the present Call system. *tick up to 5 (or none) that you think would best suit your congregation*
	* All pastors are assigned to a congregation by the Bishop after being assessed as to their suitability and needs of the congregation
	* All pastors are assigned to a congregation for a set time by the Bishop after being assessed as to their suitability and needs of the congregation
	* Congregation invites expression of interest from suitable pastors on advice of Bishop, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop
	* Congregation invites expression of interest from suitable pastors on advice of Bishop, interviews and then appoints without consulting the Bishop
	* Congregation invites expression of interest from all pastors, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop
	* Congregation invites expression of interest from all pastors, interviews and then appoints without consulting the Bishop
	* Congregation sets criteria on advice of Bishop, advertises position to all pastors, invites applications, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop
	* Congregation sets criteria on advice of Bishop, advertises position to all pastors, invites applications, interviews and then appoints without consulting the Bishop
	* Congregation sets criteria, advertises position to all pastors, invites applications, interviews and then appoints after consulting the Bishop
	* Congregation sets criteria, advertises position to all pastors, invites applications, interviews and then appoints without consulting the Bishop
2. Should more than one model of the Call process be available to congregations? *Yes/No*

Please explain your answer \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Should congregations be able to choose the model which suits them best*? Yes/No*

Please explain your answer \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Should combinations of models be available to the congregation? *Yes/No*

If **Yes** which components of the above proposed models would work best for your congregation?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you have any other comments about variations to the LCA Call process or any comment about the current process in general? Open Question

**Section 3 Needs and Expectations of your Parish**

1. What are your congregation’s expectations of the role of Pastor? *tick any that apply*
	* Pastor as Servant
	* Pastor as Shepherd
	* Pastor as Partner
	* Pastor as Leader
	* Pastor as Employee
	* Other please explain \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. The following is a list of attributes for parish ministry. Please indicate what you believe to be the **core** attributes necessary for effective ministry within your parish as well as **other desirable** attributes.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Core** attributes for effective ministry within your parish ***tick up to 6***  | **Other desirable** attributes for effective ministry within your parish ***tick up to 6***  |
| Capacity for public ministry – preaching, worship, teaching, evangelism |  |  |
| Capacity for supporting ministry – coaching, mentoring, equipping others  |  |  |
| Capacity for pastoral care – visitation, counselling |  |  |
| Capacity for innovation in worship/church programs |  |  |
| Ability to build on existing programs and strengths of the congregation  |  |  |
| Ability to minister to those who are suffering physically  |  |  |
| Ability to minister to those who are suffering mentally |  |  |
| Ability to minister to those who are suffering financially |  |  |
| Ability to minister to those who are unemployed |  |  |
| Ability to relate to and communicate with refugees |  |  |
| Ability to relate to and communicate with aged members of a congregation  |  |  |
| Ability to relate to and communicate with young members of a congregation  |  |  |
| Ability to relate to and communicate with those outside the church community |  |  |
| Ability to work alongside congregational leaders  |  |  |
| Ability to lead congregational members |  |  |
| Ability to educate and empower congregational members as leaders |  |  |
| Ability to organise and manage teams of people  |  |  |
| An understanding of modern society and empathy with alternative forms and ways of ‘doing church’ |  |  |
| An understanding of rural ministry, issues and challenges |  |  |
| An understanding of outback and remote ministry, issues and challenges |  |  |
| An understanding of inner city ministry, issues and challenges |  |  |
| An understanding of ministry within the military, issues and challenges  |  |  |
| An understanding of ministry within congregations of mixed cultures |  |  |
| An understanding of ministry within congregations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait or Maori cultures |  |  |
| An understanding of ministry within congregations in association with a Lutheran school |  |  |
| Other  |  |  |

1. If there was one area of ministry you would single out as most important for your congregation what would it be? Open question \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Section 4 Retraining, Reskilling and Review of Pastors**

1. While at your parish has your pastor undertaken any continuing education/training? If your parish is vacant, answer the questions with reference to your most recent pastor. *Yes/No/Don’t know*
2. Does your pastor have a continuing education plan? *Yes/No/Don’t know.* If No or Don’t know, go to Q70
3. Has he shared his continuing education plan with you? *Yes/No*
4. Does the congregation support the pastor’s continuing education plan? *Yes/No*
5. What type of continuing education/training did he undertake? *Tick all that apply*
* Pastoral care and counselling
* Pastoral ethics
* Spiritual growth and formation
* Death and bereavement support
* Management and administration
* Understanding different cultures
* IT skills
* Team building
* Understanding refugees
* Parenting
* Church growth
* Leadership
* Deeper theological studies
* Preaching and worship
* Marriage guidance and counselling
* Interfaith/ecumenical awareness
* Other (explain)
1. How important do you think it is that your pastor engages in continuing education/training on a scale of 1 to 5 Very unimportant to Very important?
2. What type of continuing education/training by your pastor would be most beneficial to your congregation? *Tick up to 5*
* Pastoral care and counselling
* Pastoral ethics
* Spiritual growth and formation
* Death and bereavement support
* Management and administration
* Understanding different cultures
* IT skills
* Team building
* Understanding refugees
* Parenting
* Church growth
* Leadership
* Deeper theological studies
* Preaching and worship
* Marriage guidance and counselling
* Interfaith/ecumenical awareness
* Other (explain)
1. Do you think it appropriate for your congregation to set aside time for your pastor to undertake continuing education/training? On a scale of 1 to 5 *Strongly disagree\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Strongly agree*
2. Do you think it appropriate for your congregation to set aside money for your pastor to undertake continuing education/training? On a scale of 1 to 5 *Strongly disagree\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Strongly agree*
3. Has your congregation/parish had a Review of Ministry and/or Pastor Review within the last five years?  *Yes/No/Don’t know*

If you answered **No or Don’t know** please go to Q91

1. If the congregation/parish had a review but did not use the LCA Review of Ministry Handbook, what process /format/tool was used? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/Don’t know
2. Was support for the review process provided by the District? *Yes/No/Don’t know*. (If No or Don’t know, go to Q 78)
3. If Yes, what support was provided? (*tick all that apply*)

They supplied a document for us to follow

A pastor on District staff was assigned to lead us through the process

A layperson on District staff was assigned to lead us through the process

A pastor not on District staff was assigned to lead us through the process

A layperson not on District staff was assigned to lead us through the process

Other

1. What was the experience of the congregation/parish regarding the Review of Ministry?

On a scale of 1 to 5 *Very negative experience \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Very positive experience*

1. The primary objectives of the Ministry Review are:
	* Spiritual care of the pastor and his family
	* Affirmation of, and rejoicing in, the partnership between pastor and people.
	* Professional development goals.
	* Goal-setting for the future.

Do you think these goals were met in your Review?  *Yes/No*

If you answered **No** why were these goals not achieved? **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. Did the Review process address the pastor’s personal performance? *Yes/No/Don’t know* If No or Don’t know, go to Q82.
2. In what way was the pastor’s personal performance assessed? *Tick any that apply*
* In confidence
* with Church Council
* With another pastor
* With pastoral ministry team
* With a mentor
* In consultation with church elders
* One-on-one with church chairperson
* With pastor’s family included
* Other (explain)
1. Should every ministry review be split into two separate review processes: one that focuses on current ministry review objectives; one that focuses on the pastor’s personal performance (conducted in confidence)? *Yes/No* If No, go to Q84
2. What do you perceive as the advantages of splitting the ministry review? *Tick any that apply*
* Greater clarity concerning the purpose of the review
* Greater ownership of ministry goals by parish/congregation
* Better assessment of pastor and family wellbeing
* Improved integration of congregational/parish goals and pastoral performance
* Greater separation of congregational/parish goals and pastoral performance
* Improved pastoral performance
* Better personal goal-setting by pastor
* Better self-accountability by pastor
* Better self-accountability by parish/congregation
* Greater support by the parish/congregation of pastor’s professional development
* Greater support by the parish/congregation of pastor’s personal growth
* Other (explain)
1. Were the goals that the parish/congregation included in the original Call document to the pastor a part of the Ministry Review? *Yes/No/Don’t know*
2. Are there other objectives/areas that the Ministry Review should cover?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Was the entire congregation/parish informed that the Review was taking place? *Yes/No/Don’t know*
2. Was the entire congregation/parish informed of the outcomes of the Review? *Yes/No/Don’t know*
3. Did congregation members take the opportunity to provide feedback to the participants in the affirmation workshop? *Yes/No/Don’t know*
4. What effect did the Review have on the relationship between pastor and congregation/parish?

On a scale of 1 to 5 *Very negative effect \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Very positive effect*

1. Did the congregation/parish note any changes in the pastor’s practice of ministry as a result of the Review?

On a scale of 1 to 5 *Very few changes \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Very many changes*

1. Does the congregation/parish support the pastor to have a mentor with whom he can meet regularly?  *Yes/No*
2. Would you support an outside independent review process? *Yes/No*
3. Other comments on any of the 4 areas addressed in this survey or about your experience of the Review of Ministry? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Submit

If your experience of the Call process lies outside what is described within this survey, please contact the researchers directly at alc@alc.edu.au or (08) 7120200.

# Appendix 2: Interview questions and instructions

In a resolution adopted at the 2015 LCA General Convention it was resolved that a review of the LCA Call process should be conducted. The review aims to identify and examine potential new models for filling pastoral vacancies with a view to increasing efficiency, transparency and inclusion. An important part of the review is to consult with those who administer the current call process. To this end interviews with all current and recently retired District bishops and District mission directors are being conducted in person by the lead researcher, Professor Wendy Mayer, Associate Dean for Research at Australian Lutheran College (ALC). Participation is voluntary and the confidentiality of the responses of all participants is assured.

Prior to the interview the following questions will be sent to the interviewee. The interviewee is encouraged to answer and return via email (to wendy.mayer@alc.edu.au) before the interview date all answers that require only a brief response. The questions that remain will form the basis of the interview. Written notes recording responses to questions discussed in each interview will be submitted to the interviewee for approval within 2 weeks following the interview. All primary data will be viewed solely by the researchers named in the ethics clearance and stored securely within the Australian Lutheran College. All results from the interviews will be reported in summary form only such that no individual and/or parish or congregation can be identified. Analysis of the interviews and the written responses will inform a report submitted to GCC, from which one or more recommendations will be presented to the 2018 General Convention of Synod.

**Your view of your authority/duty of care and of the call process**

1. Within the call process, how do you view your *authority* in relation to
* pastors
* parishes/congregations
1. Within the Call process, how do you view your *duty of care* in relation to
* pastors?
* parishes/congregations?

If a conflict in duty of care towards pastor and parish/congregation occurs, in your experience does one have priority over the other?

1. When assisting a parish/congregation to call a pastor, in your view how directive should a bishop or his delegate be? How directive do you think the parish/congregation expects you to be?
2. In your view, what responsibility do you have to support a pastor
* prior to installation?
* in the period after installation as the pastor “settles in” to their new parish/congregation?

Do you consider this part of the call process? Once a call has been accepted, is that the end of your responsibility? Explain.

1. Which best represents your view on the call process?
* I believe the Holy Spirit is the primary mover in the call process.
* I believe the call process is largely a human mechanism but that the Holy Spirit can work through it.
* I believe the call process is entirely a human mechanism and has no more to do with the Holy Spirit than any other human organisational decision.
* I believe the call process is a human innovation and can be altered to suit contemporary needs and situations of church bodies.
* Other (explain)
1. In your experience, which best represents how parishes/congregations view the call process?
* They believe the Holy Spirit is the primary mover in the call process.
* They believe the call process is largely a human mechanism but that the Holy Spirit can work through it.
* They believe the call process is entirely a human mechanism and has no more to do with the Holy Spirit than any other human organisational decision.
* They believe the call process is a human innovation and can be altered to suit contemporary needs and situations of church bodies.
* Other (explain)
1. What is your understanding of why the LCA uses the current Call process?
2. In your view, what is the relationship between LCA theology (e.g. its view of church and the pastorate) and the current Call Process? Does one (or particular elements of one) reflect/validate the other?

**Administering the Call process**

1. Over which District of the LCA do you have oversight?
2. How frequently do you handle calls in your District? (no. per week, no. per month, no. per year)
3. What percentage of your time is taken up by administering the Call process?
4. When did you last experience a Call process?
5. When you were elected to your current position, did you have prior experience in administering the Call process?
6. What training did you receive? Did this adequately equip you?
7. If an online training module was available for church officials administering the system, would you find this useful?
8. To what extent do you delegate administration of the Call process to other personnel in your District?
* what components do you administer directly?
* what components do they? what is their status?
* Do you utilise senior pastors in regional fraternals?
1. Is the administration of Calls issued to SMP and Graduate Pastors more or less time-consuming than administering the general Call process?

**The Call Process**

1. In your experience, how effective, efficient or equitable is the current Call Process?
2. Does it need change?
3. If yes, based on your experience what changes would you propose?
4. Of the following three factors – call process, quantity of pastors available for call, quality of pastors available for call – which in your experience causes the greatest difficulty for
	1. the person/s administering the system?
	2. parishes/congregations? Explain
5. In your experience, does the view of the pastorate held by pastors in the LCA and/or their view of episcopal authority interfere with, facilitate, or have negligible impact on administration of the Call process?
6. Describe your experience of the Call process in relation to indigenous congregations/communities
7. Describe your experience of the Call process in relation to other specific culture/ethnic-based communities of faith (Congalese, Sudanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Hakkah Chinese-speakers, Mandarin Chinese-speakers etc)
8. In regard to the Call process itself, in your experience what causes the greatest difficulty in administering the process?
9. In your experience or view, would it improve the mobility of pastors and the acceptance rate of Calls, if support was provided for the pastor and his family in the period after receipt by that pastor of a Call and during his discernment of his response to the Call? E.g., if there was a change in family or personal circumstances that had arisen since the time that the pastor had indicated willingness to entertain a Call that would now adversely affect their decision. Explain.
10. The current LCA by-Laws state in the preamble to 5.4 Calls and Transfers, *that the rules set out below are interpreted and carried out in the true evangelical spirit when:*

*5.4.1.4 pastors who have served a parish for an extended term (normally ten [10] years and beyond) earnestly consider whether the Lord would not have them place their gifts in his service in another field and, particularly when a call is extended to them upon the recommendation of the responsible authorities of the Church, feel constrained to accept such call; and*

*5.4.1.5 parishes which for many years have been blessed through the talents of their pastor do not selfishly seek to prevent him from rendering similar service in another field.*

These are guiding principles, but not enforceable. In your experience, would it improve efficiency to set a uniform fixed maximum term limit on a pastor’s Call to a parish? What if a uniform maximum fixed term was set, with an optional single extension upon negotiation between parish, pastor and bishop? (e.g. 5+3, or 6+4 years)? *Efficiency refers both to administering the Call process, and to the performance of pastoral ministry in the parish to which a pastor is called.*

1. In your experience, how would the imposition of a fixed maximum term limit on a Call affect management of the expectations of
* pastors?
* parishes/congregations?
* the pastor’s partner and family?

**Other factors**

1. In your experience, are there certain types of parishes/congregations that have difficulty successfully calling a pastor? If yes, please describe in general terms (*do not identify individual congregations*). Is geographic location a key factor? What factors are significant? Do you consider that your District is particularly adversely affected? What role is played by pastors’ family circumstances?
2. Pastoral ministry training in the LCA is currently directed towards preparing graduates to be general pastors, able to serve any parish interchangeably. In your experience, have the needs of the LCA changed? Are special skills required for serving, e.g., a rural/regional parish, a parish in a low socio-economic area, a parish with a large number of refugees/immigrants, a parish in relationship with a Lutheran school, a parish in relationship with an aged care facility? If yes, in your experience how could those skills best be acquired?
3. Is there anything else about the Call process that you would like to discuss?
1. \* Throughout this report Lutheran Church of Australia includes LCNZ (Lutheran Church of New Zealand) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)