



# **A review of the call process of the Lutheran Church of Australia<sup>1</sup>**

**General Church Board response**

**March 2020**

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) includes the Lutheran Church of New Zealand

## Summary

The Call Process of the LCA does not require major structural change despite the obvious stress the system is under from a shortfall in the current supply of pastors, the declining mobility of pastors and the skill set of the pastors currently available relative to the needs of calling bodies. However, the General Church Board has approved actions to support the recommendations of the review that will improve the overall efficiency and transparency of the Call Process. These actions can be implemented through policy, operational processes and provision of resources to support calling bodies. They do not require synodical decision.

## Background

At the 2015 General Convention of Synod a proposal was brought to the convention by St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation, Hobart to conduct a review of the LCA call process (Appendix 1). The proposal was based on St. Peter's own experience of the challenges, frustrations, and sense of alienation and despondency from historical long-term vacancy periods and unsuccessful calls. It was also concern that the call process was lengthy, time consuming, and not as transparent as it could or should be.

The resolution was passed and the General Church Council (GCC) responded to the Synod decision by engaging Australian Lutheran College (ALC) to conduct the review of the call process. The principle reviewer was Professor Wendy Mayer, Associate Dean for Research.

The review composed 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 online survey of congregations.
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.

The report "A Review of the Call Process of the Lutheran Church of Australia" was completed in July 2018. The timing of the reports delivery to GCC was too late for proper consideration by GCC and College of Bishops (CoB) prior to the General Convention of Synod in 2018.

The general conclusions of the report were presented as an appendix to the GCC report to the 19<sup>th</sup> General Convention of Synod (Appendix 2). The general conclusions were that:

- The Call Process was under stress,
- Parishes believed the process was inadequate, but could be improved, rather than replaced,
- Bishops and Directors of Mission generally reported satisfaction with the current Call Process, but indicated that it could be improved,
- The Call Process of the LCA already allows for a variety of practices, but that parishes nor bishops and Directors of Mission are aware of the full range of variants available, and
- Expectation management is important for the Call Process to function well and for the reduction of levels of mistrust and frustration.

Delegates were advised that GCC would give further consideration to the recommendations from the review. The synod was informed that the nature of the recommendations were such that, should they be supported by GCC, synodical resolution was not likely to be required to implement them.

Following the 2018 General Convention of Synod, the now General Church Board (GCB) referred the final report to the CoB requesting it to provide advice to the GCB in respect to the recommendations arising from the review. The advice was framed into a series of proposed actions as resolutions to be considered by the CoB and the GCB. These were formally endorsed by the CoB and approved by the GCB in October 2019.

The purpose of this report is to inform the delegates to the 19<sup>th</sup> General Convention of Synod of the reviews recommendations, the GCB's response to the recommendations and the actions to be taken to address each recommendation.

## Review Recommendations

Refer to Appendix 3 for a summary of the recommendations from the ALC Report "A Review of the Call Process of the Lutheran Church of Australia".

- a. Recommendation regarding the Call Process of the LCA as a whole
  1. That no major structural change be made to the Call Process
  2. That the Call Process of the LCA be reviewed in 2028 and the results reported to General Convention of Synod
- b. Recommendations that address the effectiveness or efficiency of the Call Process
  1. Replacement of pastor self-assessments/profiles in LAMP with training records compiled from a compulsory annual review of parish pastors
  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 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
    - 2.2 Production of an FAQ in LAMP
  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.
  4. Improving the data concerning pastors in LAMP
    - 4.1 Filtering the Available for Call status of pastors within LAMP
    - 4.2 Provision to Call Committees of information concerning the leave entitlements accrued by pastors whose names will be presented to a Call Meeting

## GCB Response to recommendations

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

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

**GCB Response:** The recommendation that no structural change be made to the Call Process was supported.

It was clearly stated in the review that the stress on the call system is not the process itself but other impact factors, including supply of pastors and lack of pastors with the necessary skill sets for a changing ministry environment. These impact factors need to be addressed separately.

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

**GCB Response:** The GCB recognises the need to monitor the implementation of actions to address the recommendations and their effectiveness. However, it considered committing to a full review in 2028 is too far ahead to ascertain whether such a review would be useful. The Secretary of the Church will maintain a 'watching brief' on the implementation of the supported actions to address the recommendations of the report, and will maintain regular reporting to the CoB and the GCB, as well as report to the General Convention of Synod in 2021 and 2024. During the 21<sup>st</sup> Synod, following consultation with the CoB, the GCB will seek advice about a further review, and if desired or necessary, bring a proposal for a full review of the Call Process to the General Convention of Synod in 2027.

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

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

**GCB Response:** Both the GCB and the CoB view pastor self-assessment as an important component of vocational development, and retain it to support the call process. The pastor self-assessment will be reviewed and updated, and a process put in place to remind pastors to regularly review and update their self-assessment (see also recommendation b4.1). This task will be undertaken by Church Worker Support (CWS) with the CoB. CWS is already working with the CoB to develop a manageable and effective process for vocational review of pastors (i.e. annual review). Vocational reviews of pastors will be a resource for District Bishops and assist calling bodies make informed decisions. The GCB is conscious of the need to maintain confidentiality and privacy in relation to vocational reviews of pastors. Accordingly, documentation of a pastors reviews will not be publicly available outside the confidence of the reviewing entity and the District Bishop. In implementing this process, both the GCB and the CoB are committed to creating a culture in which vocational review leading to vocational development that benefits pastors and congregations is a positive and rewarding experience.

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 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*

2.2 *Production of an FAQ in LAMP*

**GCB Response:** The need to provide calling bodies with clear and up to date information on the call process is recognised and the recommendations supported. CWS, in consultation with the Secretary of the Church and the CoB, will investigate the development and provision of resources within a training 'hub' to support congregational leaders on the call process framework that:

- addresses the principles of the process, while allowing for and documenting the various options available to parishes,
- provides parishes with instructions and guidelines for calling a pastor,
- includes resources such as template documents that parishes give to called pastors, and
- includes a FAQ document.

LCA Communications, with the Secretary of the Church, will investigate the production of a training video, with input from the CoB, which will outline the call process, as proposed by the Review. A practical mechanism for making the training video available to every parish will be explored.

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.*

**GCB Response:** The GCB acknowledges the frustration of parishes documented in the Review by the perceived delays in the call process, especially when the pastor to whom a call has been issued declines and they are obliged to re-enter the call process. Email with attached scanned copies of correspondence is now normal practice in our society, as well as in the business environment, as constituting formal and official correspondence (for example, utility bills, invoices, job applications). The efficiency to the call process electronic delivery would bring is self-evident, however, the GCB is mindful that this will not be the case in all circumstances across the LCA/LCNZ, and postage of correspondence remains the preferred, if not only viable, method for some parishes. The GCB is also mindful that the physical letter of call can have great significance for pastors. The LCA declares that "The Lord calls individuals into the office of the ministry through the Christian Congregations" (Acts 13:1-4) to "publicly...exercise the functions of this office. The minister of the Word is thus called by the Lord through His Church" (DSTO D10-What constitutes a call?). The Letter of Call is human (physical) manifestation of the Lord's special call to an individual to the office divinely instituted and service in His Church. Therefore receipt of the traditional 'hard copy' with inked signatures can mean a great deal to pastors, some more than others.

The GCB has approved both electronic and postal means of issuing a call as valid call. Parishes can continue to issue a call via the post if that is their preferred option. The use of electronic means of issuing the Letter of Call is a formal and valid receipt of call, so long as it is supplemented **with all** necessary call information, and further accompanied by a subsequent hard copy of the letter of call and relevant call information. Acknowledged receipt of the call email activates the 4-week discernment period. This will be formulated into a policy document with supporting guidelines by the Secretary of the Church and will be communicated to districts, district bishops and pastors. Further, information about what

constitutes valid and formal receipt of call, how electronic means of call can be processed and what is considered receipt of call will be included in the FAQ document as part of the training 'hub' to be developed in response to Recommendation b2.2.

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

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

**GCB Response:** The report findings indicate that there is a high level of mistrust and dissatisfaction with the current pastor self-assessment. As a core element of the current call process, it is seen to lack the relevant and up to date information parishes are seeking to make an informed call. Church Worker Support will work with the CoB to review and update the questions in the pastor self-assessment to ensure they draw out comprehensive and relevant information for calling bodies to make an informed call decision and can be reasonably expected of a pastor to disclose.

There is also information that may reasonably restrict pastors from accepting calls, for example family need to access specific medical support, spouses' employment, and children's schooling (especially children completing HSC/SACE). CWS will work with the CoB to establish a secure and confidential database for Bishops that outlines any factors that may impact on a pastor's normal eligibility for call and with reasons, and which can be conveniently retrieved in report form. However, having such a register does not automatically mean that the pastor might not receive a call outside his specified 'restrictions'. The mechanism for how pastors confide the information is also under discussion.

Policies and associated guidelines on pastor self-assessment (including regularly reviewing self-assessment) and a pastor's eligibility for call will be developed by CWS and the Secretary of the Church in consultation with the CoB for approval by the GCB. Once approved these will be communicated to all pastors through the Secretary of the Church.

Church Worker support is already working with the CoB to develop a manageable and effective process for vocational review of pastors (i.e. annual review) which when added to pastor self-assessments and information that may restrict a call will provide District Bishops and calling bodies with a more comprehensive body of information in which to make call decisions (Recommendation b1).

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

**GCB Response:** The review found that while parishes respected and understood that pastors are due and require leave, there was frustration with the current lack of transparency concerning how much leave a pastor has accrued at the time that he commences a call, if a call was issued and accepted. There is also frustration when a pastor arrived and in the first 12 months takes more than the usual annual leave; this is especially the case for parishes that have experienced a long vacancy.

There is a need to strike a reasonable balance between appropriate oversight and privacy. The relationship of pastors with calling bodies is not that of a conventional employer/employee contract. However, in considering a pastor for call the governing council of the calling body should have knowledge and records of his leave entitlements, including Rest & Refreshment (RnR) Leave, as should he accept it will become the formal approver of leave, and the appropriate governance body. District Bishops should also be aware of pastor leave entitlements in order to demonstrate a responsible level of oversight so that calling bodies might have confidence that leave entitlements are being managed and so reduce how they influence a call decision.

To achieve this, the GCB will implement the following:

1. The LCA/LCNZ Human Resources Department will provide regular reports to District Bishops on the leave entitlements of pastors and District Bishops will encourage pastors to take leave if it is building up excessively.
2. The 'Policy for leave arrangements for pastors serving in the LCA' will be amended to incorporate the following resolutions of the GCB.
  - The expectation that a pastor's annual leave is reduced to a minimum prior to commencing a new call, unless otherwise negotiated with the District Bishop.
  - The expectation that pastors normally limit the use of annual leave and RnR in the first 12 months of their call.
  - Requesting District Bishops to inform a calling committee of the unused leave entitlements of shortlisted pastors and, in the case of RnR, whether it is available for use within 12 months.

## Complimentary Work

The CoB has tasked the Secretary of the Church to establish a working group to review the Call Document especially in the light of changing circumstances for ministry, including the increase in and variety of Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) situations. This review will also update the document to incorporate requirements related to professional standards, continuing education, pastoral supervision and housing.

## Appendices

### **Appendix 1**

18<sup>th</sup> General Convention of Synod, Agenda 2.3.4 Call of Pastors.

### **Appendix 2**

19<sup>th</sup> General Convention of Synod, Agenda 2.1.2 General Church Council Report, Appendix I: Review of the LCA pastor call system.

### **Appendix 3**

A Review of the Call Process of the Lutheran Church of Australia.

## Appendix 1

18<sup>th</sup> General Convention of Synod, Agenda 2.3.4 Call of Pastors

## AGENDA 2.3.4

# Call of Pastors

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## PROPOSAL

*Submitted by St Peter's Lutheran Congregation, Hobart*

**BE IT RESOLVED** that 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 consultation with congregations as part of the research process.

## REASONS FOR PROPOSAL

1. The current processes for filling pastoral vacancies are lengthy, time consuming, and not widely transparent. In addition, the impact of personal and family considerations on the decision-making process of those receiving a call is not being acknowledged.
2. There is a danger that remote and/or less 'desirable' (and perhaps more needy) parishes will have more than their fair share of vacancies.
3. All of these issues can lead to feelings of alienation, frustration and despondency in congregational leaders and the congregations affected.
4. A more transparent, efficient, inclusive and readily understood system would both speed up and provide more confidence in the process. It is believed that an active search for new models, and the timely implementation of a new model or a raft of different models, is required.
5. It is noted that a review of the call process has been incorporated into the Terms of Reference of the College of Bishops' research project 'Pastoral Ministry in LCA: An Assessment of Current Needs and Trends'. However, it is believed that this review has a relatively narrow focus. This Congregation wishes to ensure that a review of the LCA Call Process includes an examination of potential new models and is not just an audit of the existing model.
6. This congregation also believes that many congregations have much to contribute to informing any review and seeks for the review process to include consultation with LCA congregations. This consultation should be facilitated by the sponsoring body of the review.

## Appendix 2

19<sup>th</sup> General Convention of Synod, Agenda 2.1.2 General Church Council Report, Appendix I:  
Review of the LCA pastor call system.

## AGENDA 2.1.2

# Appendix I: Review of the LCA pastor call system

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## INTRODUCTION

The Review of the Call System 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 General Church Council (GCC) responded to the Synod resolution by engaging Australian Lutheran Institute for Theology and Ethics (ALITE) at Australian Lutheran College (ALC). The principle reviewer was Prof. Wendy Mayer, Associate Dean for Research. The NSW District provided a generous grant to cover the cost of the review.

The review composed three parts.

4. Assessment of Call Process models in other comparable Lutheran churches around the world and in other denominations in Australia.
5. A national online survey of congregations (conducted between 30 November 2017 and 19 February 2018. 115 congregations responded).
6. In person interviews with current and recently retired District Bishops, Directors of Mission, and the Chair of the Vic/Tas District Lay Call Committee (11 interviews were conducted between 22 January and 22 February 2018).

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The GCC received the final report of the Review of the Call System slightly too late for inclusion in the Synod Book of reports. Some of its main conclusions are:

1. The LCA Call Process 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.
2. 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.
3. 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).
4. 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).

5. Neither parishes nor bishops and Directors of Mission are aware of the full range of variants available. A number of respondents to the survey reported that the outline of the Call Process provided with the Survey was the first time that they had gained a clear understanding of the Call Process.
6. Expectation management is important for the Call Process to function well and for the reduction of levels of mistrust and frustration.
7. In regard to potential changes to the Call Process, there was overwhelming rejection by lay people, bishops and Directors of Mission to 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.
8. The system itself as a whole suits current LCA ecclesiology and theology. The results of the review 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.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The GCC will give further consideration to the report and release it to Synod delegates before the General Convention of Synod, along with its initial response to the report's recommendations. The GCC believes that no synodical resolutions are required to enact the recommendations.

## Appendix 3

A Review of the Call Process of the Lutheran Church of Australia.  
Summary of the Recommendations from the Report



# A Review of the Call Process of the Lutheran Church of Australia\*

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

July 2018

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\* Throughout this report Lutheran Church of Australia includes LCNZ (Lutheran Church of New Zealand)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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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.