



The Mid-South District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod

Calling a Lutheran School Teacher

The Holy Spirit guides and directs the process of calling workers in His kingdom through people, on behalf of calling entities according to their constitutional process. Each step of the process will always include prayer that God's will be done and that the Holy Spirit guides the process and decisions. A Call comes from God through the calling entity and is extended by God to the called person.

Who may be a Lutheran School Teacher?

One who is "called"- Preferred

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod classifies teachers and administrators as "Minister of Religion, Commissioned." Such a person has [a] graduated from a synodical college following a synodically prescribed course of study or [b] completed a course of study making her/him eligible for a colloquy. A "colloquy" is an on-line, eight-course academic program offered by the Concordia University System for teachers who have not graduated from a synodical college, are at least 25 years of age, and have been a member of an LCMS congregation for at least two years.

One who is "contracted" - Allowed

If a congregation or association is not successful in having a call for the principalship accepted by an individual, the congregation or association may contract for those services. In that case, the formal call procedures are not required, but the steps outlined in this document may still be valuable to the search committee.

What materials do we need?

Call documents are available online at a secured website. Contact the District Office when you are ready to extend a call to obtain that site and password. The District Office will also provide the parchment paper to print the Diploma of Vocation if desired.

Who may extend Divine Calls?

1. A Call may be extended by a single congregation or an association that has the authority to extend a Call by virtue of its representing LCMS congregations.
2. A Call is ordinarily continuing, but may be issued for a limited period of time.

3. All active rostered personnel are to be engaged by Call rather than by contract.
4. All rostered personnel engaged by contract are considered “Called” by the District.

How does a congregation begin the call process?

You’re ready to start the “call process” if...

1. An official vacancy exists because
 - a. a person has resigned or retired, or
 - b. a new position has been officially created.
2. The position to be filled is defined in writing and a position description is approved by the calling congregation or association. Your position description should include ministry qualifications, an outline of roles and responsibilities, state the salary and specify all benefits you are offering.
3. A Call committee is in place according to the constitution of the congregation or association.
4. The Mid-South District office is informed of the vacancy. Notify Julie Tyler at the District office (office phone: 901.373.1343 or e-mail: jtyler@mid-southlcms.com).

How does a congregation identify candidates?

1. The members of the calling congregation or association may propose names to be considered.
2. The Mid-South District office may provide a list of candidates.
3. The Mid-South District Office may provide access to the LuthEd for a search of candidates upon request from the calling congregation. These names will come from three sources:
 - Internal files of individuals who have asked to be placed on call lists.
 - Lists of available candidates from other LCMS Districts
 - The LuthEd website – the Mid-South district office will provide access to the LuthEd – CMIF for a search of candidates upon request from the calling congregation.
4. Candidates may be requested from one of our Synodical universities or colleges. A congregation can contact the LCMS university directly or utilize the Universal Request Form located on line at <http://cus.lcms.org/ComMinPlaFeed/>.

How does a congregation know candidates credentials?

Contact the District office to request credentials of specific candidates. The District will assist the call committee in gathering all evaluative credentials. This information is to be considered confidential information. Having a candidate’s information does not suggest that this person is applying or is being recommended for the specific position.

The decision of whether a worker is truly capable and possesses the proper credentials for a specific ministry is solely that of the group responsible for extending the Call.

How does a congregation know candidates are really available if a call is extended?

Contact the candidate(s) to check on their availability for a Call at this time. The most common procedure is to telephone the candidate. The following might be a part of the telephone dialog or, as an alternative, contained in a letter to the candidate.

I am a member of _____ Lutheran _____. We are currently developing a list of candidates for the position of _____ because _____.

Through the normal process of developing a candidate list, your name has been given to us. At this point in time, is there anything that would prohibit you from considering a Call? May we leave your name on our Call list for further consideration?

By leaving your name on our Call list, we understand that you are not obligating yourself to anything.

How does a congregation investigate a candidate's suitability for a particular position?

1. Contact the people who are listed as references on the credential papers.
2. Contact the person who wrote the candidate's evaluation.
3. Contact current or past supervisors of the candidate.
4. Contact any other people who may be acquainted with this person's past performance record.
5. Request a complete background check from a security provider such as Protect My Ministry at www.protectmyministry.com or call (800) 319-5581. This service is recommended by Synod and has a negotiated lower rate for Lutheran churches.

When these people are contacted, you may ask about the person's educational style, record of accomplishments, areas of strength or weaknesses, length of service in that location, and generally about the candidate's abilities to meet the demands of the position. You may not ask any questions prohibited by law. A good local place to determine what is or is not appropriate is to ask the personnel director of your local public school.

How does a congregation interview a candidate?

The questions asked during the interview process should be prepared in advance and be directly applicable to the position and the recommendation criteria.

Consider questions which address background, administrative and teaching experience, staff relationships, planning processes, curriculum understanding, child development, methods of teaching/learning, co-curricular activities, understanding of students, and the distinct characteristics of a Lutheran ministry in congregations and schools, plans for continued education. Here are 13 sample questions a committee might ask prospective candidates. *Spend time modifying, changing, adding or deleting from this list as you prepare for the interviews.*

1. Why have you chosen the ministry of Lutheran education as a career?
2. How would you describe your teaching style?
3. How do you communicate with parents?
4. How will you build a school climate in which Christ is the center of all that is done and taught?
5. What activities might you initiated or helped to recruit new students?
6. What are some things you would do to communicate the strengths and the atmosphere of your school to the church and community?
7. How have you determine when curriculum needs to be re-examined? How will you proceed to do so?
8. List several things that you have done that have resulted in the improvement of your professional skills.
9. How would people at your present school say that you model the Christian life and provide spiritual leadership for your staff?
10. As you arrived at our facility, what was your first impression?
11. How have you gone about providing for individual differences of the children of your classroom?
12. Describe the relationship you value between yourself and your administrator. What have you done to establish and maintain a positive working relationship with your principal?
13. What other areas of interest and experience do you have outside the classroom in your school? In your personal life?

How does a congregation set up the interview?

Telephone the candidate with a specific request for an interview. Be prepared to describe to him/her the details about the interview including time, date, place and whether it is to be a telephone interview or a personal interview. Then, send the following, with a cover letter, to the prospective candidate(s) to arrive at least 72 hours prior to the interview:

- Constitution of congregation or association
- Handbooks for students, parents, and/or staff
- Position description and related information
- Information about your community

If a telephone interview:

- Make certain the all details and equipment are in good working order.
- Sit in such a way that all participants can both hear and speak into the equipment.

If a personal interview:

- Select a room that is neither too crowded nor excessively large.
- Arrange tables and chairs in a circle or rectangle.
- Seat the candidate to be part of the group rather than the target of an inquisition.
- Place a name tent in front of each person, clearly identifying each person's name.

In either case, determine:

- who should lead the interviewing process.
- who should take written notes.
- who will ask which questions.

Follow these general interview suggestions:

- Open the interview with a prayer for guidance from the Holy Spirit.
- Work to establish rapport with the candidate.
- Make a conscious effort to avoid stress.
- Listen, remain objective, and avoid biases.
- Work to maintain consistency for each candidate.
- Go through prepared questions and any that might be "tag ons" with the candidate.
- Ask if he or she has any questions to ask of the interviewers.
- Ask if there is something the group should know about the candidate that has not surfaced to this point.
- Thank candidate and close with a prayer.

After the interview:

- compare notes.
- document your observations.
- Compare the candidate's responses to the position description and to the recommendation criteria.

How does a congregation actually extend a call?

1. Follow the calling process described in your constitution.
2. Take a formal vote. Record the results in official minutes.
3. When a candidate has been selected to receive the Call, current Call documents must be prepared accurately and completely, with support material assembled, and a cover letter composed on behalf of the calling entity. All documents and materials should be sent via Priority or Registered mail **within a day** after the Call meeting.
4. A letter needs to be sent to the congregation or association of the person being called at the time of the Call, informing them of the call you are extending to this person. This is a courtesy to the organization from whom you are calling a worker. It can also be an invitation to them to join you in prayer for a God-pleasing decision.
5. Candidates who are invited to visit should have their expenses paid shortly after the visit.

How long should we have to wait for a response?

Once you extend the call, supply all additional information requested by the candidate so he/she can make the decision based on best available information. There is no prescribed timeline for

the candidate to respond. Generally accepted protocol suggests a response be made in about 30 days. The calling congregation may choose to communicate with the candidate during that time to offer any additional information. You may ask when the candidate expects to decide, but should not apply pressure to make the decision.

Obtaining the LCMS Call Documents for Commissioned Ministers

The call documents for commissioned and ordained ministers are available from the Holybytes website. These are free downloadable call documents and are created and updated by The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. The documents are located at this address: https://www.holybytes.com/cop/call_docs Call the District office for login information. Please also print out the directions on completing the call papers to avoid error and to answer questions you may have on completing the document. If you have additional questions, contact Julie Tyler at the District office (office phone: 901.373.1348 or e-mail: jtyler@mid-southlcms.com).

Commissioned ministers are teachers, DCE, DCO, parish musicians, lay ministers and deaconesses who are eligible for initial placement from one of our synodical colleges or are already listed in the Lutheran Annual. All commissioned ministers should receive a call, which may be tenured or non-tenured.

The Diploma of Vocation (page 1 only) is to be printed on a neutral colored parchment paper with a color printer. The rest of the call documents should be printed on plain white paper and contains no color.

Please print all the pages of the call document (14). If you are calling a candidate from a college (first call) the call document needs to be sent to the District Office for the District President's signature.

If you are calling a worker already commissioned, (they are listed in the Lutheran Annual) you may send the documents directly to the candidate. Send a photocopy of the call documents (page 1-9) to the District Office.

How to do CMIF Searches

Commissioned Minister Information Forms (CMIF) may be accessed through the LuthEd website, a password protected site. Search rights are granted by the District office to the principal or a member of the calling committee.

Contact the Mid-South District office to be granted search rights. Search rights are given for 60 days and may be extended upon request. The LuthEd address is <http://www.luthed.org/>. Contact *Julie Tyler* if you need to be granted search rights. You will receive an email after access is granted with your User ID and password listed.

Instructions for using LuthEd:

Find tab on top of screen: select CWU & CMIF

Please use the section titled *Refine Your Search* to set up your search parameters.

Fill in the areas you want to match.

- The search will bring up exact matches to what you type or choose in the various fields.
- The more areas you fill in the narrower the search.

Areas that are most often checked

- *Are you able to consider a position which requires relocation* YES
- *Are you interested in a new position* YES
- *Congregation Admin*
 - *Dir of Youth*
 - *Dir of Family Life*
- *Elem Preschool Admin*
 - *Principal: Elementary*
- Or none if search a teacher
- Criteria for teachers
- Remember to click the SEARCH button

To call up an individual by name, just put their last name in the *Search all Commissioned Ministers* field and hit SEARCH.

Other items to be aware

- If you chose **B** for both interested and experience you will not necessarily get those who marked just **I** for interested or **E** for experience. It has been my experience the search will pick out those who marked **B** for both.
- CMIFs must be reviewed and released before they are available to the general search file. If someone changes their CMIF, it could get help up at the district level. The District does not release incomplete CMIFs. Those on the system with incomplete CMIFs were created before the District review process was implemented. Contact the District Office to see if a CMIF you are seeking is incomplete or not released, we will contact other districts on your behalf.

Questions Which Call Committees Can Ask References Listed on CMIF

1. How long have you known the candidate?
2. In what capacity have you known the candidate?
3. How have you seen the candidate living out his/her faith?
4. How has the candidate demonstrated commitment to church/school ministry?
5. Describe the candidate's work ethic?
6. How have you seen the candidate work as a member of a team?
7. How has the candidate demonstrated time management skills?
8. Characterize how the candidate relates to students, youth, and adults and give an example of each?
9. How has the candidate demonstrated leadership?
10. What do you consider to be the candidate's greatest strength and ability?
11. What specific concerns do you have about the candidate's behaviors/practices?
12. How has the candidate responded to conflict?

13. What one word best describes the candidate?
14. How has the candidate been involved in the church outside his/her responsibilities?
15. How has the candidate been involved in the community?
16. How does the candidate build positive relationships?
17. How does the candidate communicate with parents, students, staff, and congregation members? Give an example of each. How effective is the communication?
18. What qualities do you value in the candidate?

Staff Nomination Form

Members of a congregation who wish to suggest names of a candidate are asked to please complete this form and leave it in the church office for the search committee. Having carefully and prayerfully considered the needs of our congregation and school and the ministry position description, I wish to nominate the following worker as a candidate to be considered for a Call to or contracted by our church/school:

Name _____

Current Church/School _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

I believe he/she will meet our needs as specified in the job description for the following reasons:

Please state whether you know him/her personally; where; and for how long a time:

If you do not know him/her personally, state the source of your information and the basis upon which you are making your nomination:

Signature _____

Date ____/____/____