

# California-Nevada-Hawaii District, LCMS

## Procedures for Calling Commissioned Ministers of Religion

### Introduction

These guidelines have been developed to assist congregations and schools in the process of Calling qualified workers to serve with them in ministry. While we are involved in making business decisions, it is vital that those who have accepted the responsibility of securing workers for ministry, begin so with prayer to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit who guides and directs the process of Calling workers in His kingdom through people, on behalf of congregations. A Call comes from God through the congregation and is extended by God to the Called person. For that reason, all rostered workers are engaged by a Call rather than a contract.

In the Call process, the Synod (national church body) and its Districts assist congregations and workers, to maintain the integrity and orderliness of the process. A Call may be extended by a single congregation, Recognized Service Organization (RSO), Synodical board, or any entity that has been granted the authority to extend a Call on behalf of LCMS congregations. The District becomes involved in the process when a Calling entity seeks to issue a Call, whether from the field or through Placement. The District President authorizes the Commissioning and Installation of workers who have received Calls.

Calling entities seeking to Call a worker from the field (rostered workers currently serving in other congregations or schools) should follow the steps below. Calling entities seeking the placement of a new synodical university graduate, should submit their request through the Concordia University System. Here is the link to make a submission – <https://apex.cuw.edu/ords/f?p=152:1>

### Recommended Steps for Congregations in the Call Process

1. Form a Search Committee. Read and follow the Constitution and Bylaws of your congregation. Typically, they will speak to such issues as forming a Call or Search Committee, nominating candidates, the process for Calling a worker, etc. Unless otherwise stated in your Bylaws, it is important to ensure that you have a variety of stakeholders represented on the search committee (congregation members, staff, parents).
2. Notify Joel Wahlers, the Assistant to the President for Education, that a vacancy exists. If you are Calling an administrator or DCE, please request that Joel meets with the Search Committee to familiarize the committee with the Call process and to share important aspects of Calling an administrator to a Lutheran school.
3. **(This step does not apply to Teachers)** Prior to developing a list of candidates for administrative or DCE, DCO, PA, DFLM, DPM positions, we ask that Search Committees submit the following to the CNH District. This creates a Profile that will help the District to assist you.
  - a. A paragraph description that articulates the primary goal the Calling entity hopes to attain as a result of the work the new administrator will undertake.
  - b. A list of three professional or ministry skills and three character or personality traits that the Calling entity feels will be most important for the new worker to be successful in the ministry with them. **Articulation of the primary goal and identification of the skills and traits should represent the consensus of the Search Committee and should be determined by including input from the school's governing board, pastor, faculty & staff, and other constituents as appropriate.**

- c. A description of the relationship of the school administrator to the governing board as outlined in the entity's Constitution and Bylaws.
  - d. A copy of the Job/Role/Ministry/Position Description for the administrative position to be filled.
4. Next, you may ask the District to develop a list of qualified candidates and/or request access to the Commissioned Minister Information Form (CMIF) database maintained by the Lutheran Office of Roster and Statistics in order to conduct searches for candidates on your own. Contact Shelly Alba in the CNH District Office for further guidance and acquire access to the CMIF database.
5. Process the credentials of potential candidates and gather additional information by emailing and/or telephoning them to determine if they are open to considering a Call. If emailing, provide sufficient information for them to understand who you are and how they may learn more about you; offer to speak by telephone at their convenience. Some schools use this initial contact to share a great deal about their school and its needs, giving candidates a clear understanding of why God may be leading them to you. **For teacher candidates, it is very likely you will be reviewing other candidates for a position other than rostered teachers who are eligible for a Call. If this is the case, the process of reviewing credentials, contact and communication will be very similar and probably run concurrently.**
6. Submit names of your "short list" of rostered candidates to Joel Wahlers at the CNH District Office, who will validate them for eligibility for a Call. This requirement is for the benefit and protection of the Calling entity (congregation or school). This step will only serve to confirm their eligibility to receive a Call and does not indicate the District's endorsement of any candidate. It is the responsibility of each calling entity (congregation or school) to thoroughly interview, contact references, and complete background checks according to local regulations.
7. Contact all references and other helpful sources as appropriate.
8. Interview the candidates by phone, online (e.g. Zoom), or in person. Onsite interviews are strongly recommended for all administrative positions. If choosing to interview a large number of candidates, a Calling entity might want to have initial interviews by phone or Zoom, and then save onsite interviews for your final 2-3 candidates. Calling entities pay expenses for personal interviews.
9. Review the process to be certain that each step has been properly addressed.
10. Following the Calling entity's Constitution and Bylaws, a Call may be extended. To expedite the process, have the Call documents completed and ready for signatures at the time of the Call meeting.
11. Official Call documents may be accessed by downloading a computer application from the LCMS at no cost. The app runs on both Mac and PC platforms and allows you to complete each page of the Call documents by computer before printing. Do not complete them by hand or use other documents when extending a Call to a rostered church worker. Contact Shelly Alba in the CNH District Office for access to and assistance with the Call documents application.
12. Immediately following the Call meeting, telephone the individual to inform them of the action. If it is a candidate from the field, email digital copies of the Call documents immediately after the phone call, and send the official Call documents by expedited mail. This is an opportunity to include additional information about the position or school community along with the Call documents. If the Call is to a new graduate (or First Call), documents must be sent first to the CNH District Office.
13. Inform Joel Wahlers in the CNH District Office of the Calling entity's decision.
14. Consider inviting the Called person, and spouse if applicable, to visit the school and congregations(s) at the Calling entity's expense as they deliberate the Call you have extended. This is especially helpful for administrative candidates.
15. Remain in regular contact with the individual who has been Called while they are deliberating their decision. Don't be too impatient, but offer your assistance and support in whatever way is helpful. For teachers, it might be good to have a current teacher at your school contact the individual to answer any questions and give a peer perspective on your ministry.
16. If the Call is accepted, and all paperwork has been received by the CNH District Office, then officially request permission from the CNH District Office to install the Called person. If the Call

is declined, restart the process at the appropriate stage. Contact Shelly Alba to renew access to the CMIF database if necessary.

17. Inform the CNH District Office of the installation date and the installing official. Again contact Shelly Alba with this information.
18. Plan for an appropriate welcome and orientation of the worker to the congregation and/or school.
19. Don't forget to invite the Assistant to the President for Education, Joel Wahlers, to the installation. If possible, he would like to attend.

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**Contacts:**

Assistant to the President for Education,  
Joel Wahlers ([joel@cnh-lcms.org](mailto:joel@cnh-lcms.org)) 707-738-0019.

Administrative Assistant, Office of Education  
Silas Perez ([Silas@cnh-lcms.org](mailto:Silas@cnh-lcms.org)) 925-245-4000

## KEY TERMS

There are terms which you will hear and use during the time of a worker vacancy. While most of them are easily understood, it may be helpful to list them here:

### **Call (Divine Call)**

The solemn agreement between a Commissioned Minister and a congregation designating the responsibilities that each undertakes in support of the other in fulfillment of Christ's mission. Calls can be extended as either Non-Tenured or Tenured

### **Non-tenured Call, Subject to Specified Renewal**

A call within a specified time frame, which mandates specified and formal decision on the part of the congregation and the worker to renew and continue the call or to terminate it on the terminal date of the call as stated in the document.

### **Tenured Call**

A permanent call, with no time limitations, which normally remains in force until the Lord calls a worker home to heaven, or to another ministry.

### **call**

A general call to faith or service which all Christians receive.

### **Calling Body (entities)**

May be a single congregation, a group of congregations, a recognized service agency, a synodical board, district board, or any other entity that has the authority to extend a solemn Call or otherwise engage a person by virtue of its representing (a) congregation(s) of the Synod.

### **Call/Search Committee**

A committee of the congregation, usually appointed by and responsible to the church council or Board of Directors, charged with guiding and guarding the process of calling a Commissioned Minister. The committee does not make decisions for the ministry but ensures that members have full information about and access to the decisions rightfully belonging to the entire ministry. The committee will make recommendations, but the congregation/school/Board issues the call. The constituency and procedure of the call committee is often stipulated in the congregation's bylaws.

### **Call Documents**

Documents which: (1) express the solemn nature of the agreement ready to be instituted between a congregation/school and worker and (2) state that each is ready to assume responsibilities for the good of the other and in support of furthering the mission Christ gives to the school/congregation.

### **Calling from the Field**

Describes the process of issuing a call to a worker who is serving another congregation or is on "candidate" status.

### **Call List**

The list of candidates, including those nominated by the congregation and those recommended by the District, from which the congregation will select and call a Commissioned Minister according to the process prescribed by the congregation's constitution and bylaws.

### **Call Meeting or Call Service**

The congregational meeting (service) at which the Commissioned Minister is chosen according to the process prescribed by the congregation's constitution and bylaws.

Normally the constitution and bylaws require that there be sufficient notice of such a call meeting, if applicable to your governance. This requirement should be faithfully observed.

### **Candidate/Candidate Status**

Is used to designate a Commissioned Minister in good standing on the Roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, currently not serving in a called position in a congregation or other LCMS ministry position, but eligible and available for such a call.

This term is also used in reference to a Concordia University graduate who is ready for his/her first call and placement through the process used by the Concordia University System and the Board of Assignments.

### **CMIF**

Commissioned Minister Information Forms – This is a professional record of service that each Commissioned Minister is to keep up to date. It also includes a set of 14 Ministry/Philosophy questions that will be beneficial to a Call committees determining if the worker has potential to be a good fit.

### **Colloquy Applicant**

A lay worker who has gone through the colloquy program and is now ready for their first Call.

### **Commissioned Minister**

1. Graduated from a synodical college following a synodically prescribed course of study (or colloquy) in the following specific categories: Teacher, Director of Christian Education, Deaconess, Director of Parish Music, Director of Outreach, Director of Family Life Ministry, Parish Assistant, and Lay Minister
2. Certified for ministry by the college faculty
3. Commissioned upon
4. Acceptance of a CALL issued through synodical Board of Assignments
5. Both male and female teachers should be called into ministry by the same process. Both male and female teachers should be called into ministry using the same official call documents. No differentiation between teachers should be made on the basis of gender, i.e., they should receive equal pay and benefits for equal work.

### **Commissioned Minister Classifications**

- Director of Christian Education
- Director of Christian Outreach
- Deaconess
- Director of Family Life Ministry
- Director of Parish Music
- Lay Minister
- Teacher

### **Contract**

A binding agreement between two or more persons or parties. An employment contract should be in writing. Workers who are not eligible for a call should be employed by contract. Some congregations also choose to contract part-time workers.

### **Diploma of Vocation**

The title of a Call document

### **Executive Director of School Ministries**

The Executive Director of School Ministries is a District employee who gives oversight to congregations and schools and to the Commissioned Ministers on the Roster of Synod.

**Office of Public Ministry**

The office of public ministry is divinely established and referred to in Scripture as "shepherd," "elder," or "overseer." Within this office are contained all the functions of the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the church.

**Ordained Minister**

A pastor who has been certified for parish ministry by the church-at-large (LCMS through its seminaries) and has been called to the ministry of Word and Sacrament by a congregation or agency of our church.

**Pastoral Ministry**

A Minister of Religion, Ordained who serves as pastor of a congregation; (sometimes referred to as a minister.)

**Public Ministry**

The service of a minister (ordained or commissioned) who has been Called by and serves a congregation in one or more specific functions of "The Office of Public Ministry".

**Roster of Synod**

The list of ministers (ordained and commissioned) who have been certified by an LCMS college, university, or seminary, signed the Constitution of Synod, and have been recognized by the LCMS District President, who has ecclesiastical supervision over him or her.