

Frequently Asked Questions regarding our Call Process

Who is on the Call Committee?

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What is a Call Committee?

A call committee screens, interviews, and recommends pastoral candidates to the congregational council.

What is a Ministry Site Profile?

The Ministry Site Profile is the primary way that potential pastors learn about St. James. The MSP describes our congregation and the kind of pastor we are seeking. This comprehensive document is provided to the ELCA where pastors can review the information and reach out to the SCSW Bishop's office to show their interest in discerning their call to our church.

What is Pastor Jerry's Role?

Pastor Jerry helped to guide the Transition team, then to help move from the work of the Transition team to the work of the Call Committee. Since then, Pastor Jerry plays no direct role in the work of the Call Committee. He is available for advice and prayer.

What is the Council Role?

The Council approved the MSP and identified members to serve on the Call Committee—which was elected at the August 2024 semi-annual meeting. Then, the Council will receive the recommendation on the pastor to call from the Call Committee. The Council will vote on whether to move that call forward to the congregation to vote, and then will preside at the special congregational meeting to vote on whether to extend the call. If the vote carries, the Council will formally extend the call to the pastor, and if accepted will negotiate with the pastor about all the details related to beginning a new call (timing, communication, salary/benefits/moving expenses, etc.).

What can the Congregation do?

The congregation can pray: pray for wisdom for the Call Committee—that we would be aware of the movement of the Holy Spirit among us, and in the life of our next pastor. We are trusting that the Lord has a wonderful new pastor for us—and we want the ears to hear from the Lord. Pray for wisdom and patience for the call committee and for our congregation as a whole.

Pray also that the Lord would be speaking to our next pastor, and that this person would be attentive and willing to move with the Spirit's urging.

What pastor role are we filling?

This current Call Committee is searching for a Lead Pastor. A future call committee will be called, if needed, to search for an associate pastor.

Is Pastor Peter retiring?

Yes. Pastor Peter has decided to retire in 2025. He will retire one month before the new Lead Pastor begins at St. James, or by his birthday in August, whichever comes first.

Is an associate pastor being called to work with Pastor Peter?

No. Since Pastor Peter is retiring, the congregation is calling a new Lead Pastor.

Is Pastor Jerry now a permanent pastor at St. James?

No. Pastor Jerry is our interim pastor, and is not eligible to become a permanent pastor. The plan is that he will be at St. James until the new Lead Pastor begins.

Will the new pastor be a man or a woman?

Both men and women are pastors in the ELCA (the ordination of women began in 1970). The call committee will consider all appropriate candidates, whether they are men or women, and recommend the candidate that is the best, mutual fit.

Why is the process so long?

After Pastor Kurt retired, the Council needed time to decide about a process. Pastor Jerry began as our interim pastor, and worked with the Transition Team to complete a listening time within the congregation to identify strengths and build on them. The Transition Team used the results to complete the MSP. Then the call committee was elected, and has been diligently working since October 2024. This work has included studying the content of the MSP and preparing to interview pastoral candidates. St. James has had co-pastors who served around 20 years each. After such long pastorates, a significant investment of time and care in the transition process will prepare the ground for our next pastor to also serve for many years.

How much longer will it be before a new pastor starts?

There is no easy answer to this question. We are confident that God will lead us to a pastor, but the timing will be God's, not ours. Here are some factors that impact the time question:

There are a limited number of pastoral candidates available. Also, not every available pastor matches what St. James is looking for as far as years of experience and specific skills. Finally, a call is a mutual relationship. The call committee may choose a candidate, but the candidate also has to choose to accept the call, and must consider the needs of a spouse and/or children when making a decision.

The earliest we imagine a new pastor beginning is the May-June 2025 timeframe. But some pastors may not want to move until the end of the summer. Other factors could mean the search will last longer.

What is the role of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin?

The Synod has already been a big support to St. James. A staff member from the Synod, Marie Leafblad, is the person who works with congregations searching for a new pastor. She helped our Council with its decisions, connected St. James with potential interim pastors, oriented the call committee, and continues to answer questions and provide resources.

Marie is aware of pastors in our own Synod who are ready for a new call, and she communicates with other synods around the whole nation to learn about more pastors who are seeking a call. If a pastor is interested in St. James, Marie provides them with our MSP so they can decide if they want their name given to our call committee. Once she has one or more pastoral candidates, Marie will meet with our call committee and provide a document called a Rostered Minister Profile which each pastor has filled out.

One more thing the Synod does: before any pastor is presented to our call committee, the Synod will have checked with that pastor's current bishop to make sure this pastor is in good standing within the ELCA.