



**Policy and Procedures for Calling or Contracting Ministry Staff**

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# Policy and Procedures for Calling or Contracting Ministry Staff

## Introduction

This document addresses the policies and procedures surrounding the calling and hiring of ministry staff. Many of Messiah's employees have received specialized Synodical education and training and are eligible for individual membership in the LCMS. Individual members of the Synod are listed on a roster and formally designated as "ministers of religion- ordained" or "ministers of religion- commissioned".

Messiah also employs ministry staff members who have not been formally trained through an LCMS-affiliated college or university. These staff members may perform essentially the same job functions but are not formally designated as ministers of religion. It is Messiah's intent that all staff members are held to the same standards, regardless of their status as either a called minister of religion or a non-called staff member. *(Note that the LCMS requires all ordained ministers to be rostered members of the Synod. Therefore, all full-time pastoral staff will be called.)*

## Background

Professional church workers who are called to serve a congregation within the LCMS must agree to abide by specific bylaws regarding their employment. Within the last 10-20 years, congregations have increasingly hired ministry staff that are not called or Synodically trained. This trend has caused complications in HR matters by creating different employee classifications, i.e. "called" and "non-called", leading to confusion and legal conflict. In 2012, the Supreme Court affirmed the "ministerial exception" for religious organizations, which bars the government from interfering with the church's choosing of its ministers, in this instance regarding the termination of a called teacher (*ref. Hosanna-Tabor Lutheran Evangelical Church & School v. EEOC*). However, this case does not address non-called workers and therefore would not necessarily apply to those employees.

## Code of Conduct & Ethics

Messiah Lutheran Church and School staff members who are called as Ministers of Religion are held to specific confessional and behavioral standards by virtue of their membership in the LCMS (*ref. 2010 LCMS Handbook*). However, **all** ministry staff at Messiah (both called and non-called) are expected to abide by these same standards, as well as other behavioral standards not specifically stated in the Synod Handbook. Therefore, Messiah has developed a Code of Conduct and Ethics that is signed by every staff member upon their employment. Violations of this code may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, for all staff members regardless of their employment status as called or non-called.

## Hiring of Ministry Staff

### Hiring Policy

With the knowledge that all ministry staff hired at Messiah is held to the same high standards, with all other factors being equal, our employment preference is as stated:

1. Synodically trained ministry staff (may or may not be rostered or called)
2. Individuals with strong Christian background and values who are faithful members of an LCMS church
3. Individuals with strong Christian background and values who will support and teach the beliefs of the LCMS

The following ministry positions within the church may be eligible for a call: pastor, teacher, director of Christian education, school administrator, director of Christian outreach, director of family life ministry, director of music, deaconess, parish assistant, and certified lay minister.

All calls offered to commissioned teachers by Messiah Lutheran Church will be one-year non-tenured calls.

All contracts offered to non-called full-time teachers by Messiah Lutheran Church will be for a one-year period.

The terms of a call (i.e. tenured vs. non-tenured, length of the call) for other called ministry staff members will be specified by the Board of Lay Ministry at the time of the call recommendation to the congregation.

Ministry staff members who do not serve under a call or a contract are employed on an "at-will" basis in accord with Missouri employment law.

While Messiah is not required to notify the Missouri District when hiring non-rostered ministry staff, we consider it best practice to work extensively with the District before, during, and after the candidate selection process.

Because Messiah believes that Synodical training is a vital part of our teachers' overall skill set, any teacher who is hired that did not graduate from a school within the CUS must begin the Colloquy program during the school year in which they were hired. Exceptions may be granted for part-time teachers in specialized subject areas such as art, PE, foreign languages, etc. The tuition and related fees for the Colloquy program will be paid by Messiah, with the understanding that Messiah will be reimbursed by the candidate for any course that is not successfully completed. All courses must be completed within two years, unless a special exception is granted by the Executive Ministry Team.

## Hiring Process

1. A core selection team is formed that is composed of:
  - a. Direct supervisor of the position
  - b. Senior Pastor or his designee
  - c. HR Representative
2. The core selection team will evaluate the job description and assemble a subcommittee or call committee to participate in the interview process. One member of the core team will always be a member of the subcommittee. Job descriptions are posted on Messiah's website and other relevant sites as needed (e.g. LCMS synod and district sites, Concordia University System site).
3. The core team will review all candidates' application materials (resumes, applications, LEIFS, etc.) and conduct initial interviews with selected candidates. These interviews may take place by phone or in person.
4. Selected candidates may be invited to visit Messiah for face to face interviews with both the core team and the subcommittee. This two-part interview process offers job candidates an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of our culture and daily operations. It also serves to identify candidates who are strong technically, yet will be equally strong in promoting Messiah's mission, vision, and values.
5. The core team, with input from the subcommittee, will identify the best candidate for the position.
6. The qualified candidate is offered the position. In order to abide by the Synod's wishes and remain faithful to Messiah's church constitution, candidates are either:
  - a. CALLED- the job candidate is recommended for a call by the Executive Ministry Team to the Board of Lay Ministry. If the recommendation is approved, the BOLM will recommend that the candidate be called by the congregation. A congregational meeting is held to vote on the approval of a call. If the congregation approves the call, the job candidate is offered the position

OR

  - b. NON-CALLED- the job candidate is offered a contract or at-will employment by a member of the selection committee upon approval by the Executive Ministry Team

Recognizing the need to inform our congregation while also respecting the privacy of job candidates, it is important to note that Messiah will generally only share a limited amount of information about a candidate being considered for a call:

- Name
- Church background and experience

- College program completed
- Years of experience
- Any additional certifications/specializations which are relevant to the position

## Glossary of Terms

### **LCMS- Lutheran Church Missouri Synod**

Messiah Lutheran Church is one of roughly 6000 congregations belonging to the LCMS. While each congregation within the Synod is self-governing, we operate according to our shared beliefs and practices as articulated in our confessions and our Constitution.

### **Missouri District**

The LCMS is divided into 35 regional districts; Messiah is located in the Missouri District.

### **Rostered Worker**

A professional church worker who has graduated from a CUS college or university or the Colloquy program and has been deemed eligible may apply to be placed on the roster. Applications to be listed on the roster are approved by the Council of Presidents. The roster is a list of all workers in the Synod who are eligible to receive a call.

### **Synodically trained**

A teacher who has graduated from a CUS school or the Colloquy program but may or may not be rostered for various reasons.

### **Call**

We believe that God divinely places individuals where they are meant to serve within the church. A congregation may extend a call for an individual to serve in a specific capacity (such as teacher). When an individual is offered a call, he or she may, after prayerful consideration, accept or decline the call. Any rostered worker may be extended a call by any LCMS congregation at any time. A call can be **tenured** (no specified timeframe) or **non-tenured** (specified timeframe).

### **Colloquy**

The Colloquy Program is an intensive theological training program consisting of several courses for teachers or other church workers who did not graduate from a CUS college or university, but wish to become Synodically trained.

### **Commissioned**

When ministers receive and accept their first call, the Rites of Commissioning are carried out in accordance with Synod practices. This grants the teacher formal membership within the Synod as a *Minister of Religion- Commissioned*

### **Installed**

When commissioned ministers accept subsequent calls to congregations, the Rites of Installation are carried out in accordance with Synod practices. This allows the ministers to publicly state their beliefs to the congregation in which they are serving.

### **Contract**

A signed employment agreement between Messiah Lutheran Church and School and an employee. A contract will have a specified time frame.

## **Resources**

*Memorandum on Calls vs. Contracts for Ministers of Religion-Commissioned*

*Call Rubrics for Commissioned Ministers of Religion*

*LCMS 2010 Handbook*

*Hosanna-Tabor Lutheran Evangelical Church & School v. EEOC*

*Messiah Lutheran Church & School Code of Conduct & Ethics*