

***Admission to the  
Pastoral Ministry of  
The Lutheran Church—  
Missouri Synod by  
Colloquy***

*Bylaws and Policies*

*2015*

# ***Admission to the Pastoral Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by Colloquy***

## ***Bylaws and Policies***

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### ***Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry (Bylaws 3.10.2, 3.10.2.2; 2.7.2; 2.8.1; 2.8.2 and 2.9.1; 2013 Handbook)***

3.10.2 The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry shall be responsible for the reception and processing of applications for individual membership in the Synod through colloquy.

3.10.2.1 The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry shall consist of the First Vice-President of the Synod as chairman, a district president appointed by the Council of Presidents, and the presidents of the seminaries or their representatives.

3.10.2.2 The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry shall establish and monitor academic, theological, and personal standards for admission to the office of the pastoral ministry by colloquy after consultation with the faculties of the seminaries.

(a) In consultation with the President of the Synod, it shall develop all necessary policies to govern eligibility and the process to be followed to determine qualifications and suitability for pastoral service in the Synod.

(b) Decisions to declare applicants qualified for the pastoral ministry and to certify for placement shall be at the sole discretion of the committee.

(c) Every applicant whom the committee declares qualified shall be assigned his first call by the Council of Presidents acting as the Board of Assignments.

### ***Emeritus Pastors from Other Church Bodies (Bylaw 2.7.5, 2013 Handbook)***

2.7.5 A pastor emeritus from another church body, after having completed an approved colloquy program of the Synod, may be placed on the roster of the Synod without call by action of the Council of Presidents on the basis of policies adopted by the Council of Presidents.

(a) Such placement shall be acknowledged by a rite of recognition in a worship service, preferably of the congregation of the Synod where he holds membership.

(b) Such rite is to be authorized by the district president.

## *Policies Governing Colloquy*

### *Definition*

A colloquy in its simplest form is a conversation, in this case, a theological and moral conversation held to examine certain applicants, in order to declare them qualified for a first call (or not), and to certify them for placement in the pastoral ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

### *Meetings of the Colloquy Committee*

The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry shall meet at the call of the chairman (the Synod's First Vice-President) as often as he deems it necessary to consider adequately the applications received. Normally there shall be at least four meetings of the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry per year.

### *Interview Panels*

The chairman, at his discretion, may appoint other ordained men to serve on interview panels on an *ad hoc* basis as needed. The executive for pastoral education appointed by the President of the Synod may be asked to participate in the work of the committee as an advisor.

### *Eligibility for Colloquy*

#### *General Requirements*

Applicants for colloquy must be male, men of good moral character who have been prepared for the pastoral ministry in some manner **apart from** the various routes leading to ordination existing within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. An applicant must *“be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil”* (1 Timothy 3:2-7; See also 4:1-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 1:5-9, etc.). The

Colloquy Committee for Pastoral Ministry will, as it considers each applicant, be the final authority for determining eligibility according to these Biblical requirements.

*Specific Requirements for Eligibility for Colloquy*

To be eligible to apply for colloquy, applicants must fit into one of the three categories listed below (the applicant will indicate under which category he is applying, but the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry is responsible for the final determination of the category in each individual situation):

- 1) **Active Pastors from Other Christian Church Bodies:** Men who, at the time of application are in good standing and in active service as pastors in another Christian Church body/denomination may apply for colloquy. Such applicants must be graduates of a program of study that leads to ordination, from an accredited institution,\* with no fewer than 60 semester hours (90 quarter hours) of required academic credit. Such applicants must also have served at least three years in a recognized ministry of their church body, and must supply suitable documentation of their active status and good standing in their current church body/denomination. Pastors of congregations that are not affiliated with a church body/denomination (are “non-denominational” or “independent”) also may apply, but must supply suitable references and documentation of their authorization to perform pastoral ministry. In all cases the academic requirements will apply.
- 2) **Men from Other Christian Church Bodies Who Have Prepared for Pastoral Ministry but, at the Time of Application, Are Not in Active Service as Pastors:** Such applicants must be graduates of a program of study that leads to ordination, from an accredited institution,\* with no fewer than 60 semester hours (90 quarter hours) of required academic credit. Applicants with prior pastoral service must provide the date (month and year) and the reason (e.g. retirement, resignation, dismissal) their active service ended. References and suitable documentation will be required. Such an applicant also must have been a communicant member in good standing in a congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for at least two years\* immediately prior to the time of application. This category does NOT apply for LCMS members who while members of LCMS congregations have obtained Master of Divinity degrees outside the LCMS (see below).
- 3) **Licensed Deacons of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:** Men who have been licensed by the president of a district of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to carry out, as a licensed deacon, the full responsibilities of the pastoral ministry in (a) congregation(s) of the Synod, and who have carried out these responsibilities for at least ten years,\* may apply for admission to the pastoral ministry by colloquy. In all cases, such applications also must be accompanied by the recommendation of a congregation that holds membership in the Synod, on the basis of that congregation’s observation of and experience with the applicant. The application must also include written documentation

from the congregation and the district president that the applicant actually has been responsible for carrying out the full responsibilities of the pastoral ministry for at least ten years. Finally, to be considered by the committee, the application must be accompanied by the congregation's written commitment to extend a divine Call for the applicant to become its pastor once the colloquy process has been completed.

- \* **Note:** Should the sponsoring district president be convinced that the Colloquy Committee for Pastoral Ministry ought consider, on the basis of an applicant's special circumstances, an exception to one of these specific eligibility requirements (asterisked above), the sponsoring district president must furnish with the application a written recommendation detailing the special circumstances and the rationale for the recommended exception. The Colloquy Committee, however, retains the responsibility and authority for deciding to grant or to decline the exception. The decision of the Colloquy Committee shall be regarded as final by all parties to the colloquy application.

### *Others*

Other applicants for the ordained ministry, such as commissioned ministers of religion, laymen of a special ethnic or linguistic group, and laymen who have fulfilled at least 10 years of significant service in a congregation, will participate in special theological education ("alternate routes") under the direction of the seminaries. LCMS laymen and commissioned ministers who receive a Master of Divinity from a non-LCMS Seminary will also participate in an "alternate route" at one of our LCMS seminaries. All individuals who do not fit the three specific categories open for colloquy are to be directed to one of the seminaries of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

## *Application through the District President*

Applicants for colloquy shall be directed to the president of the district where the applicant resides. The district president shall have responsibility to help the applicant prepare a complete and thorough application package.

- (1) The district president shall personally interview the applicant to ensure that he meets the requirements for eligibility to apply for colloquy (both general and specific, see above, pp. 4-5).
- (2) The district president shall refer the applicant to the District Interview Committee (the committee that also interviews seminary applicants), who shall give a report and recommendation to the district president. *Appendix One* lists suggested questions for this preliminary interview in the district.
- (3) Upon successful completion of an interview with the District Interview Committee, the district president shall recommend qualified applicants to the chairman of the colloquy committee.
- (4) Such recommendation shall be processed according to the policies and procedures adopted by the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry as herein set forth.

### *Application Package*

The applicant shall prepare or obtain, as appropriate, all materials required for a complete application (*See Bylaws 3.10.2; 3.10.2.2; 2.7.2; 2.8.1; 2.8.2; and 2.9.1; 2013 Handbook*). This application package shall be assembled by the applicant and the district president and shall include the following:

- 1) The applicant shall authorize the district president to request a complete background check through "Protect My Ministry." The applicant shall tender payment for all "Protect My Ministry" fees with the completed authorization form to the district in which application is being made (*See Appendix Four* for more detailed information – fees are established by each district). A copy of this report (minus the Social Security Number) shall be provided as part of the application package.<sup>1</sup>
- 2) The applicant shall complete the form "Application for Admission to the Pastoral Colloquy Program..." The applicant (plus, if married, the applicant's wife) and the district president shall sign the application where indicated, or the application will be returned. The district president needs to indicate whether or not he would like the applicant to be placed in his district.
- 3) In addition to the information required to complete the application form, the applicant shall prepare an **autobiographical statement** setting forth clearly the applicant's background and reasons for seeking admission to the Synod's ministerium by colloquy.<sup>2</sup> The applicant will also prepare **two theological essays** of approximately 1500-1800 words each on topics assigned in the application form.
- 4) The applicant shall arrange for written testimonials, sent directly to the district president, which assess the applicant's Christian character and life, personality, abilities (especially in pastoral ministry), and previous service. These testimonials shall come from no fewer than three competent references who have known and observed the applicant for at least the two years immediately preceding his application.
- 5) If the applicant is actively serving in pastoral ministry or has previously served as a pastor, one of these testimonial letters must come from the applicant's ecclesiastical supervisor; if not, one of the letters shall come from the applicant's pastor. If applicable, the testimonial from the applicant's ecclesiastical supervisor shall assess the applicant's current or past pastoral service under his oversight, together with a declaration of the applicant's standing in the church body/denomination in which the supervisor holds

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<sup>1</sup> This is sensitive information and will be treated with great care. However, it is necessary for the application process. The applicant may wish to check his credit report himself through one of the three US credit bureaus.

<sup>2</sup> Non-US Citizens will be required to provide proof of legal residency in the United States of America.

membership.

- 6) The district president shall arrange for an interview of the applicant with an interview committee within the district. The report of the interview committee is to include a detailed assessment of the applicant's suitability, and a recommendation whether the applicant should be declared qualified (or not) for a pastoral call in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod upon completion of the colloquy process (See *Appendix One*). A written copy of this report shall be included in the application package.
- 7) The applicant shall arrange for transmission to the district president of official (original) transcripts from all colleges and seminaries he has attended. The applicant also shall furnish evidence of earned continuing education units (CEUs) and of other non-credit academic and professional experiences completed. The colloquy committee reserves the right to seek independent validation of credit.
- 8) The district president shall attach a cover letter to the application package which declares his strong endorsement and sponsorship of the applicant. The district president shall make sure all requested information has been provided and shall send the completed package with appropriate signatures, to the First Vice-President of the Synod as Chairman of the Pastoral Colloquy Committee.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The applicant (plus, if married, the applicant's wife) and his sponsoring district president must sign the application form where indicated.

## *Public Notice*

Normally the colloquy committee shall publish notice of its intent to interview an applicant in an official periodical of the Synod. Under extenuating circumstances, the applicant may, for valid reasons, request that the committee make an exception to this requirement, so that such notice would be delayed until after his interview.

(1) If no valid objection is received by the committee within 30 days after the publication of such notice, the applicant may be interviewed.

(2) If the applicant was interviewed first, notice shall then be published and upon publication 30 days given for valid objections to be received before the applicant may be finally declared qualified (or not) and certified for placement in the pastoral ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

(3) The committee, in its sole discretion, shall decide whether an objection is valid. Its decision shall not be the subject of any appeal.

## *Interview and Criteria*

The colloquy committee shall arrange for a personal colloquy interview, or discussion, with qualified applicants. The committee's final decision on each applicant shall be made on the basis of such colloquy examination and shall be the sole prerogative of the colloquy committee. The criteria by which the colloquy committee shall determine an applicant's readiness for certification are based on the following standards, including but not limited to

- (1) areas of general education;
- (2) understanding of and agreement with the scriptural and doctrinal positions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod;
- (3) familiarity with the history and polity of the Synod;
- (4) studies in theology assuring a well-rounded education in the major fields of theological discipline;
- (5) positive experience in the work of the pastoral ministry; and
- (6) demonstrated moral character ("above reproach").

The colloquy committee, at its sole discretion, shall determine the content and amount of academic work, personal study programs, or supervised ministry that may be required prior to certification. To this end, the committee may request the assistance of the seminary faculties or of qualified pastors or teachers in other locations to serve as instructors or mentors.

The committee, at its sole discretion, may require a second colloquy interview following the completion of such study and/or supervised ministry programs.

## *Certification and Placement*

The colloquy committee shall

- (1) declare qualified and certify for placement those applicants who have satisfactorily completed the colloquy interview and any other requirements as assigned by the colloquy committee;
- (2) report this action to the chairman of the Council of Presidents Placement Committee for the Pastoral Ministry, to the Office for Pastoral Education of the Synod, and to the appropriate district president; and
- (3) publish a report of its favorable action in an official periodical of the Synod.

Every applicant whom the colloquy committee declares qualified and certifies for placement in the pastoral ministry shall be assigned his first call by the Council of Presidents acting as the Board of Assignments (Synod Bylaw 2.9.1). *Appendix Two* includes a checklist showing the action steps to be taken for the placement of Colloquy Candidates for the Pastoral Ministry (Ministers of Religion—Ordained).

## *Report to the Synod*

The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry shall report to the Synod in convention.

*Revised January 2015*

## *Appendices*

### *Appendix One*

#### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT INTERVIEW COMMITTEES TO POSE TO COLLOQUY APPLICANTS**

1. Describe, in detail, your pilgrimage as a pastor, especially your service in your current/previous denomination.
2. Why do you want to enter the ministerium of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod?
3. Have you read the Book of Concord? What do you understand is the heart and core of Lutheran teaching?
4. How familiar are you with the culture, polity, and practices of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod? Please identify some areas where they differ from your current/previous denomination. What is your understanding of the confessional position of the LCMS as outlined in Article II of our constitution?
5. Are you willing/prepared to complete further requirements as may be determined by the Synod's Pastoral Colloquy Committee such as mentoring, vicarage, additional education, etc.?
6. Our assumption is that your wife will be making the change in denomination with you? How does she feel about that change?
7. If you are certified for placement on the clergy roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, are you willing to serve anywhere? Are you willing to serve as a worker-priest?
8. Have you ever been arrested, charged, or convicted of a crime?

## Appendix Two

### CHECKLIST FOR THE PLACEMENT OF COLLOQUY CANDIDATES INTO THE PASTORAL MINISTRY (See Bylaws 2.10.1-2.10.4, 2010 Handbook)

Action steps to be taken after:

- A colloquy candidate has been declared qualified for pastoral ministry and certified by the Colloquy Committee for Pastoral Ministry of the Synod for placement. (Inclusion on the Synod's roster takes place after the candidate has been placed in a first call and he has been installed in that call), and
- A letter has been received by the district president and the colloquy candidate informing that the colloquy committee has declared qualified and certified the candidate for placement.
- A man certified for pastoral ministry by the Pastoral Colloquy Committee is not eligible to receive a call by placing the man's name on a traditional call list since he is not a member of the Synod. Instead, the District President, after consultation with the colloquy applicant, should approach an appropriate congregation and ask the congregation to consider calling the man. If the congregation agrees to do so, the process to be followed is similar to that used in the calling of a seminary graduate.

\* \* \*

1. \_\_\_\_ Following the completion of all colloquy requirements, a "Colloquy Certification Letter" will be sent by the First Vice-President of the Synod to the Synod's Office for Pastoral Education and the district president who submitted the application for colloquy.
2. \_\_\_\_ The district president, where the colloquy application originated, contacts calling congregations within his district regarding possible placement of the colloquy candidate and/or shares the candidate's name with other district presidents.
3. \_\_\_\_ If a calling congregation determines to extend a call to the colloquy candidate, the call documents are prepared (an original plus a copy) and submitted to the district president for his signature (page 10).
4. \_\_\_\_ Once the district president has signed the call document and has made a copy for the district file, he mails the original document to the Synod's Office for Pastoral Education with a cover letter indicating that it is a colloquy placement through the Board of Assignments.

NOTE: Interim placement can be requested, in writing or by email, if placement is not close to the time of fall, winter or spring placement.

5. \_\_\_ Once interim placement approval has been received by the Synod's Office for Pastoral Education from the Chairperson of the Council of Presidents Placement Committee, the Synod's Office for Pastoral Education notifies the district president that the call documents are being sent to the colloquy candidate at the address provided by the district.
6. \_\_\_ The colloquy candidate accepts the call, in writing, to the entity which issued the call and includes the signed call document. A copy of the acceptance letter is to be sent to the district president.
7. \_\_\_ The district president sends the colloquy candidate a new member packet, which contains items necessary to complete the membership application process.
8. \_\_\_ The colloquy candidate applies for membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as a minister of religion—ordained by completing the "Application for Membership" form and forwarding it to the district president of the district in which the calling entity is located.
9. \_\_\_ The colloquy candidate requests installation in the entity which has issued the call by completing the "Request for Ordination or Commissioning" form and forwarding it to the president of the district in which the calling entity is located well in advance of the installation date.

(If the colloquy candidate has already been ordained, a second ordination is not necessary.)

10. \_\_\_ The colloquy candidate continues communication with the calling entity and the district president, as needed, including copies of all correspondence as appropriate. He shall take special care to:
  - a. \_\_\_ Confirm the arrival date, installation date, and other plans with the appropriate individuals.
  - b. \_\_\_ Check that the district president has authorized the installation.
  - c. \_\_\_ Work with the circuit counselor who is responsible for planning the installation service.
  - d. \_\_\_ Confirm his "moving" plans with the calling entity, if applicable.
  - e. \_\_\_ Confirm his housing needs, if applicable.
  - f. \_\_\_ Confirm with the calling entity the starting date for his salary and health benefits.
11. \_\_\_ The district president's office completes Form 1 and mails it to the officiant conducting the installation. Following the installation service, the officiant signs and returns the

form to the district president (along with a copy of the worship service folder for inclusion in the colloquy candidate's file).

12. \_\_\_\_ When Form I has been returned to the district president, three copies are made (one for the president's file, one for the candidate's file, and one to be mailed to candidate). The original is mailed to the Department of Rosters & Statistics at the LCMS International Center. The individual is now officially on the roster of the Synod.

## *Appendix Three*

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR CALLING A COLLOQUY CANDIDATE** *(for the use of the district office):*

A man certified for pastoral ministry by the Pastoral Colloquy Committee is not eligible to receive a call by placing the man's name on a traditional call list since he is not a member of the Synod.

Instead, the District President, after consultation with the colloquy applicant, should approach an appropriate congregation and ask the congregation to consider calling the man. If the congregation agrees to do so, the process to be followed is similar to that used in the calling of a seminary graduate.

When submitting a call for a colloquy candidate, please include:

- A cover letter that informs the Pastoral Education Office that this is a call for a colloquy candidate.
- A copy of the letter that states that the candidate has met all requirements and was declared qualified and certified for pastoral ministry by the colloquy committee on a particular date.
- The completed and signed call document.
- The address where the document should be sent when approved. If this is not included, the documents will be returned to the district office.

The Pastoral Education Office will then verify that the:

- Candidate has completed requirements and was declared qualified and certified for pastoral ministry.
- COP Placement Committee has granted placement.
- Document was mailed to the candidate and the district office.

*Reminder:* DO NOT send commissioned minister calls (teachers, DCE, DCO, etc) to the Pastoral Education Office. Commissioned minister calls go directly to the placement office at the Concordia university or college by which such individual has been colloquized or from which such individual is graduating.

## *Appendix Four*

### **QUESTIONS REGARDING BACKGROUND CHECKS**

The Clergy, Call, and Roster Committee (CCRC) of the Council of Presidents has prepared “Frequently Asked Questions” regarding the process of background checks for Commissioned Minister colloquy applicants. Background checks are also required for pastoral colloquy applicants. Therefore, the following items adapted from the FAQs provided by the CCRC are applicable to the pastoral colloquy application process.

#### **Frequently Asked Questions regarding Background Checks for Colloquy Applicants**

##### **What background checks need to be done on Colloquy Applicants?**

The Council of Presidents has determined that all background checks need to be done through **Protect My Ministry**, a service provider which has a national contract with the Synod. While Protect My Ministry is able to provide a number of different background checks, the Council of Presidents has determined that the following six (6) searches are mandatory for all colloquy applicants:

- County and Statewide Court Searches
- Credit History Report (if allowed by state law)
- Motor Vehicle Search
- National Criminal Database Search
- National Sex Offender Registry Search
- Social Security Trace

##### **Is there a fee involved for doing the background checks?**

Yes. **Protect My Ministry** has a standard fee associated with each of the searches mandated by the Council of Presidents. Various counties and states charge fees in addition to those charged by Protect My Ministry. The district president can inform you of the cost based on the counties and states which need to be contacted to complete your background checks. The current fees charged by Protect My Ministry for the six (6) required searches ranges from \$31.00 - \$100.00.

##### **Who pays for the background checks?**

The colloquy applicant is responsible for the cost of the background checks. The applicant will need to pay for the background checks at the time he submits the signed authorization form which is needed to conduct the background checks.

### **When do the background checks need to be done?**

The mandatory background checks are the first step in the colloquy process following the submission of an application for colloquy.

Once an individual has submitted an application for colloquy, he should contact his district president to make arrangements for the mandatory background checks to be done.

### **Who does the background checks?**

District presidents are responsible for completing the background checks as part of the colloquy process. Each district president has designated someone in his office who is authorized to arrange for the Protect My Ministry background checks to be done.

### **Who initiates the background check process?**

The applicant is responsible for contacting the appropriate district president's office to arrange for the background checks to be done.

### **How long does it take to complete the background process?**

The results for most Protect My Ministry background checks are normally available within 72 hours.

### **How long are the background checks valid?**

The background checks which are completed through Protect My Ministry, like any background check, are a snapshot. They reflect what is known at the time the background check is done.

### **Will the background checks be retained? If so, who will have custody of them?**

Yes. The background checks which are done as part of the colloquy process will be retained indefinitely by the district president. In the case of pastoral colloquy applicants, copies of the background check reports with the social security number blocked out will be sent to the Colloquy Committee with the application. This is part of the normal work of the Council of Presidents in partnership with the Colloquy Committee (by consensus of the COP in September 2011).

### **Where are the background check reports sent?**

The results of the background checks will be retained by the district president. Copies will not be shared with other entities (but see above with respect to the work of the Pastoral Colloquy Committee). Verification that the background check has been done, and information relevant to the colloquy process, will be shared with those entities which need this information.

**What about colloquy applications which are already “in the pipeline?” Do background checks need to be done on them?**

The decision to require background checks on all colloquy applicants was adopted by the Council of Presidents in November 2008. Therefore, it does not apply to those who had submitted their application for colloquy prior to November 2008.

**How will those colloquy applicants who have already been certified but who have not yet been placed be handled?**

The decision to require background checks on all colloquy applicants was adopted by the Council of Presidents in November 2008. Therefore, it does not apply to those who have been certified but not yet placed.

**How do congregations or the district subscribe/work with Protect My Ministry?**

Congregations, schools, and Districts can subscribe to use the services of Protect My Ministry. Additional information regarding this service provider is available at: <http://www.protectmyministry.com/lcms>. All background check requests, as well as the results, are handled via the Internet.

Clergy, Call, and Roster Committee (2-09)  
Adapted by the Pastoral Colloquy Committee (12-11)