

*Resources for
Alberta Congregations
during A Time of Vacancy*

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WHEN A VACANCY OCCURS

Your Pastor has left...

He has accepted a call elsewhere. Or perhaps he has retired. It is God's will that congregations be served by pastors (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11) and you want to get on with calling a new pastor. You want to fill the Pastoral Office, which is presently vacant. You make arrangements for a pastor to serve you on a temporary and part-time basis to cover the very basic needs of the congregation. You contact the Circuit Counselor and District President to plan for a call meeting. You solicit names of potential candidates to be considered at the call meeting.

A pastoral vacancy can also be a time for growth, as God's people respond by offering even more of their time and talent in the ministry of the church. It is a time to remember in a special way that the church is the Lord's, and that He will indeed provide all the gifts for effective ministry, according to His good will.

But are you prepared to call a new pastor? Does the congregation have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses to identify the God-given gifts and abilities they need in a pastor? Are there unresolved conflicts with the previous pastor or among the members that need to be dealt with before the congregation can move on? What are the challenges that the congregation faces now and in the next five years? Can the congregation's budget support the salary of a full-time pastor?

In other words, what is the homework the congregation needs to do in preparation for the calling process? And how will the congregation care for her pastor when he accepts the call?

Congregations often see a vacancy as a time when the work of the church is put "on hold." Not so! Word and Sacrament ministry will still be carried on through the work of vacancy pastors and the congregation can use the vacancy period in a constructive way to prepare for its next pastor.

PART I A SNAPSHOT...

It can be helpful to see where the congregation is in regard to some very basic statistics and also the work that is generally conducted on a fairly regular basis.

What follows is a very basic profile form that provides a "snapshot" of what is happening in your congregation. Much of the following information will need to be provided on the call documents that you will send a pastor when you call him so this will be an useful exercise not only in preparing to call, but also in providing information for the pastor-elect.

You may wish to appoint an individual or small group to complete this profile and then to have the elders and/or church council review it.

CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE

Date _____

I FOR THE RECORD

Name and Location of Congregation _____

Circuit Counselor _____

Vacancy Pastor _____

Date when pastoral vacancy began (will begin) _____

Who should be listed as **Official Contact Person** in the congregation:

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone Fax E-mail

II STATISTICAL INFORMATION

	Present	3 years ago	5 years ago
Communicant Membership			
Total Baptized Membership			
Average Church Attendance			
Sunday School Enrollment			
Average Sunday School Attendance			
Bible Classes (combined average weekly attendance)			
Adult Bible Classes			
Youth Bible Classes			
Total Congregational Budget			
Synod/District Mission Offerings			
Average/communicant giving (all purposes)			

III GENERAL INFORMATION

How long did the previous pastor serve? _____

Average length of ministry of the last three pastors _____

Would you describe your community as _____
Growing Declining Stable

Major occupations of your membership _____

Do you conduct Vacation Bible School? _____ Most recent enrollment _____

Who is in charge? _____

Do you have a week-day children's program? _____

Most recent enrollment _____ Which grades are involved? _____

Who is in charge? _____

Are special qualifications or training sessions required for Sunday School teachers before they are allowed to teach? _____ While they are teaching? _____

How many men serve as Sunday School teachers? _____

Beside the pastor, are others involved in teaching Adult Bible Classes? _____

Does the congregation have a regular Evangelism Program? _____

If yes, how many members are involved: _____

Is a particular evangelism *method* used? _____ Which? _____

If no, do you think a regular evangelism program is needed or desired? _____

Why, or why not? _____

How many people were brought into the congregation during the past year?

_____ By Adult Confirmation or Baptism _____ By Profession of Faith

_____ By Transfer

How many people were removed from the congregation during the past year?

_____ By Removal _____ By Transfer _____ By Death

_____ By Release

What percentage of membership did not commune at least once during the past year? _____

Your average Sunday Church Attendance is _____ % of your total Baptized Membership.

What type of Stewardship Program do you use?

- _____ Every Member Visit
- _____ Personal Interviews
- _____ A Variety of Programs
- _____ Cottage (group) Meetings
- _____ Commitments during service
- _____ No Specific Program

What percentage of your members make a regular financial pledge? _____

Do your offerings for district/Synod come from:

- _____ A regular percentage of total offerings?
- _____ A fixed budget amount?
- _____ Separate mission offering envelopes?
- _____ Mission festival or other special mission Sundays?

What kind of administrative structure do you use? (*Voters - Church Council; Lay Ministry Board, etc.*)

IV IF DUAL PARISH

How many kilometres between congregations? _____

What parish activities are conducted on a joint basis? _____

What more can be done jointly? _____ In what areas? _____

Is there an inter-parish council or committee that meets regularly? _____

On what basis are dual parish decisions made? _____

Any particular problems in the dual parish arrangement? _____

On what basis are pastoral compensation and other financial matters handled? _____

V IF THE CONGREGATION OPERATES A SCHOOL

What year was the school established: _____ What grades does it offer: _____

What is the enrollment Present _____ 3 years ago _____ 5 years ago _____

How many teachers does the school employ? (Include part-time and administrators): _____

How many support staff does the school employ? (Secretarial, custodial, etc.): _____

What is the annual tuition for members? _____ For non-members: _____

Any form of government Assistance (e.g. tax credits)? _____

Does the school provide reduced tuition for church workers families? _____

Does the school receive any kind of provincial funding for its school? _____

If the school receives provincial funding, how much? _____

What percentage of the students are members of the congregation? _____

What percentage of the students are not members of any Christian church? _____

Does the congregation own and operate the school or is it a part of a local school society?

How many teachers are:

Rostered LCC Teachers: _____

Non-rostered LCC Teachers: _____

Non-LCC Lutheran Teachers: _____

Non-Lutheran Christian Teachers: _____

VI MULTIPLE STAFF

Identify the other church workers on staff (e.g. DPS, Associate Pastor, Vicar, etc.) and describe their areas of responsibility:

WORKER	AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

(Note: If more space is needed, please provide the additional information on a separate sheet of paper)

PART II EVALUATION

The “snapshot” or congregational profile provides very basic and statistical information about the congregation. Beyond that, every congregation has a story to tell. It is made up of sinful people who have been redeemed by our Lord and Saviour. One could summarize the church’s story in two words: sin and grace. Our sin and God’s grace. God works in and among His people through Word and Sacrament to forgive, to nurture and to bring forth works of service.

An evaluation is a time to look at sin and grace as they are at work in our congregation. It also provides an opportunity to identify those things which, perhaps, have been hindering the work of the church. Some of these can and generally should be dealt with during the vacancies. Other will require the gifts and strengths that your new pastor will bring.

This is a section for which you will wish to have broad input. You may wish to set aside a couple of evenings to work through this section. Please be sure to include representatives from all areas of the congregation (e.g. LWML, youth, young adults, etc.). For the sake of objectivity, it may be helpful to have this process guided by someone outside of the congregation. The Circuit Counselor would be a good person to approach. If he is unable to lead the process himself, he may suggest someone to you who can.

A. “Know Thyself”

(Note: As you answer the following questions, if you have not yet developed what we call “strategies,” this may be a good time to work through some of them. If you intend to wait for your new pastor in order to develop strategies with him, please make sure you convey this in the call documents.)

1. List the three greatest strengths that the congregation has and outline any strategies that you have developed, if any, to make good use of them.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

2. List the three greatest weaknesses that the congregation has and outline any strategies that you have developed, if any, to address them.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. List the three greatest challenges within the congregation at the present time and outline any strategies you have developed, if any, to address them (e.g. youth, worship attendance, Sunday School, development of school, etc.)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

4. List the three greatest challenges outside the congregation at the present time and outline any strategies you have developed, if any, to address them (e.g. opportunities for outreach among new ethnic groups, growing community with little or no Christian presence, etc.)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

5. No two congregations are exactly alike. In a sentence or two, describe the uniqueness of your congregation.

6. As you look at your strengths, weaknesses and challenges, what are some of the gifts and qualities which you believe it will be important for your next pastor to have?

B. How We Work Together

1. The way in which a congregation structures itself is not something which is spelled out in Scripture. Our guide, when it comes to church administration, is that “...*all things be done decently and in order.*” (1 Cor. 14:40) It is important, however, for all components of the congregation to have a clear and mutual understanding of their responsibilities and their accountability within the congregation. The ultimate goal is that our life of service together in the church might be to the glory and praise of the Lord of the Church. On a separate sheet of paper, list all of the organizations and administrative components of the congregation. Does each one have a clear sense of its responsibilities and its accountability? If not, what needs to be done to make these things clearer?

2. While a congregation’s structure is not spelled out in the Bible, the Pastoral Office is. Does the congregation have a clear understanding of the role and responsibility of the Pastoral Office? Ask the vacancy pastor or Circuit Counselor to lead a Bible study on the Pastoral Office.

3. As you look at how you work together, what are some of the gifts and qualities which you believe it will be important for your next pastor to have? Please make sure to reflect these expectations in the call documents.

C. How We Live Together

The Bible tells us “*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*” (Romans 12:18) This is not simply some good advice - it is an obligation which we have as redeemed children of God. Jesus exhorts us to love our enemy (Matt. 6:44); to show our brother his fault in

order to gain him back (Matt. 18:15); we are to forgive “*seventy times seven*” (Matt. 18:22). St. Paul writes, “*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*” (Gal. 6:10)

By reason of sin, conflict can happen. James writes, “*Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.*” (James 4:1-2) It happens between the best of friends, in the best of marriages and in the friendliest of churches. Particularly in the church, it diverts energy from doing the work we have been called to do. We lose sight of who the real enemy is and we may even begin to destroy one another. St. Paul writes, “*If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*” (Gal. 5:15-16)

In this section, you will be asked to be forthright about any conflict which may exist in your congregation. Many a pastor’s ministry at a new call has gotten off on the wrong foot because he walked into a “hornets’ nest” of conflict. If there is conflict, it is best to acknowledge it and deal with it as much as possible before the new pastor arrives. Your vacancy pastor and Circuit Counselor can be a great resource for you in addressing conflict situations and the District Office can assign people who have had special training to work with you.

Perhaps your church has not experienced any significant conflict and there is a healthy atmosphere where people, empowered by the Gospel, consistently are focussed on peace and reconciliation in all of their dealings. If that is truly the case, rejoice and move on to the next section. But if it is not the case, please be honest and be prepared to do the hard but important work of reconciliation.

1. Has your congregation experienced a major conflict in the last several years which remains unresolved?
2. Was the conflict:
 - a. Primarily issue related (i.e. disagreement over budget, ministry direction, doctrine, etc.)?

- b. Primarily a relationship issue (e.g. personality clash, etc.)?
- c. A combination of a. and b.?

3. If the conflict was related to an issue, describe the issue.

4. How would you describe the relationships in the conflict?

- a. Pastor vs. congregation (or portion of congregation);
- b. Between groups in the congregation;
- c. Between individuals in the congregation;
- d. Between the congregation and an outside group in the community;
- e. Between the congregation and the larger church (e.g. circuit, District, Synod)

5. Briefly describe the conflict and outline the approach that has been developed to address it. If no approach has been considered or implemented, please speak to your Circuit Counsellor and/or vacancy pastor about it. Do not ignore the conflict!

Description: _____

Plans to address the conflict:

6. As you look at the cause of conflicts and the skills necessary to deal with them, what are some of the gifts and qualities which you believe it will be important for your next pastor to have?

PART III REPORTING

It will be helpful to have a meeting of church members where you will share the information you have put together. This should not be a Voters' meeting since no real business of the church will be conducted. This will be an information session at which you will want the broadest representation possible of church members.

After the information is shared, ask the members what gifts they believe it will be important for their new pastor to have. A list, something like the one below, would be a helpful handout. After the people have discussed and recorded their responses, please remember to collect them so that an accurate summary can be developed.

1. Strengths we need in our new pastor:

- _____ Administration (working with boards, committees, organizations)
- _____ Calling on "delinquent" members
- _____ Calling on general membership
- _____ Calling on sick and shut-ins
- _____ Community involvement
- _____ Evangelism/Outreach
- _____ Participation in circuit/district/Synod affairs
- _____ Pastoral Counselling
- _____ Preaching Content
- _____ Preaching Delivery
- _____ Teaching Adults
- _____ Teaching Children
- _____ Stewardship Leadership
- _____ Social Involvement with Members
- _____ Worship (planning and conducting services)
- _____ Training and Leading Members in various areas of service
- _____ Youth Ministry

NOTE: WHEN YOU HAVE COMPLETED ALL OF THE ABOVE SELF-EVALUATION, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU PROVIDE A COPY TO THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT AND YOUR CIRCUIT COUNSELOR. IT WILL BE HELPFUL TO HIM IN PROVIDING YOU WITH COUNSEL AND ADVICE AND IN DEVELOPING A LIST OF PASTORS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION.

Let's Begin The Calling Process

So how do we go about calling a pastor? Some congregations have had the same pastor for twenty-five or thirty years and the members are quite unfamiliar with the process. Others have had a number of successive short pastorates and are quite familiar with the process.

The “process” is not a legalistic set of rules and regulations. The process is flexible where it can be. It also reflects who we are and how we function as a church. On the one hand we are autonomous congregations free to call whomever we wish. At the same time we have voluntarily joined Lutheran Church-Canada and have agreed that we will call only those who are on the clergy roster of LCC.

The following Guidelines have been developed by the LCC Council of Presidents:

GUIDELINES / CALLING PROCEDURES FOR LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA CONGREGATIONS

1. The vacant congregation contacts the district president and/or circuit counselor for the calling process to be initiated. The district president and the circuit counselor consult.
2. The district president writes a letter to the congregational chairman, with a copy to the leaving pastor and circuit counselor, outlining the procedures to be followed and sending a copy of the Congregational Profile and Self-evaluation for completion. They are completed and returned to the president's office before the Preliminary Call Meeting.
3. The district president, in consultation with the circuit counselor and the congregation, sets a Preliminary Call Meeting date. The purpose of this meeting will be:
 - a. To review what it means to call a pastor, the responsibilities of a pastor, and the pastor/congregational relationship;
 - b. To review the information on the Congregational Profile and Self-evaluation, look at the congregation's present situation, and discuss the pastoral gifts required to meet the needs of the congregation;
 - c. To review the procedures that are followed in our Synod for the calling of a pastor;
 - d. To arrange for vacancy services or to confirm arrangements already made.
4. Both the district president and the circuit counselor are present for the Preliminary Call Meeting. A vice-president may be called upon, if the president can not be present.
5. A Call Meeting is scheduled not earlier than four weeks after the Preliminary Call Meeting. The required notification of the Call Meeting is given to the congregation. The Call Meeting is a Voters' Meeting at which only those eligible to vote can do so. Ordinarily, the circuit counselor and/or the district president must be present at the Call Meeting.
6. Members of the congregation may submit proposed names through their chairman, to the district president for consideration and, if considered suitable, for inclusion on the Call List. These names should be submitted to the district president not later than three weeks before the Call meeting.

7. The district president prepares the Call List, taking into account the needs of the congregation as expressed through the Congregational Profile and the Preliminary Call Meeting. He will provide information on the names (if any) submitted by the congregation as well as on the names he himself has proposed for the Call List. The list will normally include at least five names. A copy of the PIF (Pastoral Information Form) and SEF/SET (Self-Evaluation Form/Self Evaluation Tool)(when available) will be provided to the circuit counselor for each pastor on the list. A paragraph will be provided to the congregation and circuit counselor on each pastor, summarizing his biographical information and his strengths in ministry. The SEF/SET will also be provided to the congregation.
8. The Call list is provided to the Call Committee of the congregation at least one week before the Call Meeting. The Call Committee is encouraged to propose a Short List for the election process when more than six names are on the list. The Call Committee chooses names of pastors for the Short List whose talents best fit the needs of the congregation as stated in the Congregational Profile.
9. On the Sunday prior to the Call Meeting, the entire Call List is presented to the congregation, indicating the names and information on those pastors picked for the Short List. The congregation will be given the reasons for those proposed for the Short List. Members are requested not to use this information as a basis for campaigning, but prayerfully to consider it in advance of the meeting.
10. The Short List is presented as the Slate of Candidates at the Call Meeting. Voting members have the opportunity to add pastors from the Call List to the slate or to take a name(s) off the slate. Once a slate has been approved and a prayer for guidance of the Holy Spirit has been spoken, the voting takes place by written, secret ballot (by name, not by number), with a majority needed for election (unless the congregation's constitution requires a higher than simple majority). Where there is no clear majority, the name with the least number of votes is dropped for the subsequent ballot, until a majority is reached.
11. Where the constitution of the congregation so requires, the vote is made unanimous, after which the congregational chairman informs the elected candidate of the call by telephone.
12. Only one pastor is elected at a time. Another meeting is called if it is necessary to issue another call.
13. The call documents are signed and sent out by courier or priority post at the earliest possible time. (Most of the information on the documents should have been filled in before the meeting so that no time is lost in getting the documents off.)
14. The call list sheets are gathered up and taken back by the circuit counselor/district president.
15. Interviews in advance of the call, contact of any kind with the candidates on the Call List, and campaigning for candidates are strongly discouraged, because it can blind voters to the direction of the Spirit. However once a pastor has received a call from the congregation, a meeting for the purpose of helping him with his decision may be arranged with the congregation. In such cases, the congregation would generally pay the expenses of the pastor to such a meeting.
16. All ordinations and installations must be authorized in advance by the district president.

As You Prepare to Call A Pastor

1. Encourage congregational members to submit names of LCC pastors. Now that you have shared the Profile and Self-evaluation, they should have a pretty good idea of the kind of pastor they will need to call. Please use the form nomination form contained in Appendix I.
2. Work through salary, housing and benefit details before the call meeting. The District provides Salary Guidelines which are the minimum suggestions for a pastor serving in a subsidized congregation. These guidelines can serve as a good starting point. You will want to address the following areas:

Do you use the salary guidelines provided by district? _____		
Is your proposed pastor's salary _____ above; _____ below; _____ equal to guideline figures		
Is the pastor's salary regularly reviewed? _____ By whom? _____		
Amount of car allowance _____		
Do you provide:		
Parsonage	_____	
Utilities	_____	
Housing Allowance	_____	Amount _____
Equity Allowance	_____	Amount _____
LCC Worker Benefit Plans	_____	Amount _____
Continuing Education Allowance	_____	Amount _____
Pastoral Conference Expenses	_____	Amount _____
Arrangements for vacation and time off:		

If parsonage is provided:		
How many bedrooms? _____	Are any appliances furnished? _____	
What size family can the parsonage comfortably accommodate: _____		
Is the study/office provided in the church, or in the parsonage? _____		

3. You will be provided with a set of call documents which you will want to complete prior to the call meeting. The documents themselves call for only very basic information which you can easily supply from your Congregational Profile. In addition, you will want to provide information about your community, schools, housing etc. particularly if the pastor-elect has a family. You should also provide any planning documents you have developed. Include also the last couple of annual reports, some newsletters and bulletins. A letter from the congregational chairman will also be helpful. Please have these **ready for the call meeting** so that they can be couriered to the pastor-elect the next day.

When You Have Called A Pastor

You are calling a new pastor. There is excitement in the air. He has said, "Yes!" And as tempting as it may be, this is not the time to sit back and relax, thanking God that the vacancy is over, and you can just coast waiting for the pastor to come to do all the work.

Some very useful things can be done as you prepare for his arrival. Here are some suggestions:

1. Working on Deferred Maintenance

a. The Parsonage

If there is a parsonage and you know the roof has needed to be repaired, get it done. If the plumbing is on its last legs, fix it. If the windows are so old they are letting in too much cold air in winter, replace them, or find a better temporary way to use them until a permanent solution can be found.

A Word of Caution: As much as possible, and particularly if changes might involve matters of taste or decor, or of functional use of the house, like the positioning of the walls, it might be a good idea to talk with the pastor and his family about it. They will have to live with the changes for who knows how long. And there is no better way to indicate your respect for your new pastor and care for his family if you get them involved before all the decisions have been made and changes have been made.

b. Church, Parish Hall, etc.

The parsonage should come first, if you have one. Furthermore, whatever is said about the parsonage also goes for the other facilities owned by the church. The same good rules of courtesy apply.

Anything in the area of deferred maintenance that needs to be done should be done. If the roof is leaking, fix it. If the furnace keeps breaking down, do something about it. On the other hand, anything affecting the look and functionality of facilities should be considered more carefully. Anything that can wait, should be delayed. In any case, it's always a good idea to talk with the new pastor about changes being made.

Avoid radical changes not expected, like changing the color of the sanctuary from blue to chartreuse to "surprise" the pastor for his service of installation. One congregation actually did that, and eventually ended up laughing about it as they began to realize how awful an idea it had been. It didn't take long for them to change the color back. And fortunately the pastor didn't have to say anything about it-they came to the realization all on their own. And as for the pastor, it helped him to grow in his ability to be more patient-with God's help. God sometimes works in mysterious ways. Everyone grew through the experience, but sometimes there are easier ways to do it.

2. Getting Ready to Adjust to a New Pastor

An obvious reality is taking place as you prepare for your new pastor. He is not your former pastor. And, as a matter of fact, your congregation is not exactly like any other congregation he has ever seen. In some ways that may be a really good thing. He gets a fresh start working with you. You get a fresh start working with him in ministry. In other ways, there may be times, particularly in the first year when

you both may be grieving at least a little bit and for different reasons, he, because he is adjusting to realities he may not have been thoroughly prepared for, and you, because you are adjusting to a pastor who is just not the same as the old one you once had. In fact, it may turn out that your first impressions in some ways were wrong. They usually are. He may turn out better in some areas than you had ever dreamed he would be, and a little weaker in some areas than you had actually anticipated. But, in time, both congregation and pastor are always grateful for the way God uses these opportunities to strengthen the entire ministry, pastor and people working together, in new ways. It becomes an opportunity for useful change and growth.

As you prepare for the next phase of your ministry, which will be an opportunity for mutual adjustment and growth for both pastor and people, again have the elders meet together with key leaders to try to talk about what you know and don't know about your new pastor. Also talk about things he may know and not know about you. Make a list. Include any questions you forgot to ask him. List any questions you have recently received from him about you. Focus more on strengths, the good things he has going for him and that you have going for you. This can become very useful information for you to talk with him about either before or soon after his arrival so that you can begin building on strength upon strength.

3. Preparing for a Really New Pastor - A Candidate from the Seminary

Five things you can know for sure if you are getting a candidate from a Seminary to serve as your new pastor:

- a. He will be theologically ready for ministry.
- b. He will have had some very good practical experience in ministry, gained especially from field work assignments while at the seminary and from tasks assigned to him during the vicarage year while working with another congregation and their pastor.
- c. He has a valid call from the Lord to serve you.
- d. On the other hand, he does not have twenty years of experience as a parish pastor, and therefore your expectations should be adjusted accordingly. In the meantime, he has every reason to expect your prayers and your love and respect and your willingness to try even some unusual things out as he gains from the experience acquired in serving you and as you gain from the experience of being served by him.
- e. He may be concerned at times about his personal financial situation. For that reason, be especially supportive and understanding of the financial realities he may be facing:
 1. He may have heavy student loans that need to be paid back. The same may be true of his spouse, if he is married.
 2. He may have unusual initial costs, especially if he is moving from a semifurnished apartment to a parsonage provided by you. Does he have a lawn mower? Probably not. Are there some appliances he wouldn't have had a chance to buy and pay for in advance. Probably so.
 3. All this can really begin to add up pressure and stress in time for a young pastor and his family. In the meantime, you may be tempted to believe what a great thing it is

to have a pastor like that-so young, so inexperienced, so likely to put up with a lower base salary. And what a great deal it is for the congregational budget, too.

But the creative and caring congregation is able to read between the lines of his stress. They may even be prepared to give a little more, and offer some unexpected extra help, realizing they actually could afford to do it if they tried. After all, he is on a lower salary scale, and if it had been anyone else more experienced they would have to pay him more. They may be able to do more than they think with a little extra help to get him and his family over the hump that is likely to be happening during the first years of ministry.

4. Especially it is important not to take advantage of the situation by cutting corners even more, for example, by not providing something for housing equity if a parsonage is provided, or by not providing fair mileage or help in other legitimate areas of cost. Don't ask him if he really needs it. You know he does. If you ask him, he is likely to say, "No," or find it very hard to come forward boldly in a sensitive area like this. For he may believe at first what you might want him to believe-and that is that you really can only afford to help him with the basics, as you see it, and with nothing more.

But here we are talking about some very basic realities like housing equity and other costs he is absorbing in order to serve you. Take care of your pastor in these areas, and he will love you so much more and really thank God for having such a wonderful congregation that cares.

5. Everything about financial realities for a new candidate may also be true to some extent of a new pastor who has years of experience behind him. Indeed, sometimes the move from one city to the other, and the timing on the sale of homes, or other special challenges may be creating additional worries for him. It may be something you ought to talk with him about, if he is willing to talk with you about it. There are ways you can be morally supportive of him, even if nothing more tangible can be done to express that kind of support.

4. Things to Do after The New Pastor Arrives

The excitement is building. The pastor and his family (if he has a spouse and children) are scheduled to arrive very soon. You have done all the usual things. The installation service has been prepared. Assisting pastors have been notified. The welcome dinner/pot luck will be ready. Invitations for special guests and extended family of the pastor have been sent.

The temptation is to feel once the pastor is installed and the initial celebration is over, the pastor should be able to take it from there. And he will. But wait. There are other really good things to think about to get this next phase of ministry off to a good start. Here are some ideas.

1. Introducing The Pastor to The Community

Many things can be done to help the pastor and his wife to feel more at home in the new community that he will serve.

- a. Work with the media to have a nice article in the local newspaper with picture introducing the pastor to the community. A radio/tv spot where possible would also be good.
- b. Members who belong to any civic clubs or other community organizations should be sure to invite the pastor to be their guest wherever appropriate to introduce their new pastor to people in the community who care. This does not have to lead to competition over who will get the pastor to join whose civic club, although sometimes it may be a good idea in some circumstances to address the matter.
- c. Members may also step forward who know the mayor, school board chair, and other officials to take the pastor to meet some of these people, so that he can get more of a feel of the community than he might not otherwise have. The same goes for the arranging of visits to the places where you work, especially any mainline businesses or industries that affect that lives of many people in the community where you live. The same also goes for visits with social agencies and available counselling services that have people who have a special awareness of community challenges and can help.

2. Introducing The Pastor to Yourselves

- a. The congregational dinner on the day of installation is just a start. As far as the pastor is concerned, there are so many new people and so little time really to get to know anyone very well.
- b. Seriously consider initially having the pastor and his spouse come by for dinner in different homes with possibly four or five new couples each time pitching in potluck to make it easier on the host and hostess who live there. This could continue until virtually everyone has had a chance to meet the new pastor and wife on a more personal basis than might otherwise be the case. And don't forget to have someone help with babysitting if there are small children in the pastor's family.

This kind of approach can give them a real chance to feel welcome and also help them to break the ice. Otherwise, it can be a much more formidable a task for the pastor to try to visit every family within the first six months, hoping to find them home, hoping to strike a good relationship from the start, and otherwise feeling a little nervous and overwhelmed by the task.

By the way, the same can be true even for the most experienced of pastors. By you taking the initiative and saying "welcome" in this very personal way you can be doing a lot to help the pastor to move more quickly into pastoral care for the congregation. And in the meantime it can reassure pastor and spouse that there is not something wrong with them. Otherwise, they may be wondering why absolutely no one has invited them to come by or taken any personal interest in them since they arrived. This can happen more often than you may think. In fact, because of it we have known of pastors and wives whose loneliness became so acute they could

hardly stand it. It is as if no one thought about the fact that they had come to their community and been literally cut off from all past ties that had been meaningful to them.

In fact, this can be especially true of candidates from the seminary. All their friends have been sent out in all directions in Canada to their new congregations. All support systems of friendship have been on a practical and day-to-day basis severed. You can help. And your congregation's ministry can be strengthened very much as a result.

Every pastor will need a time of adjustment. If your pastor is new to your District, be sure to allow him the time needed to attend the District-sponsored New Workers' Orientation. Check with the District Office to see what materials may be available immediately to help your pastor adjust to his new church and community. (See Appendix IV)

APPENDIX I

NOMINATION OF PASTOR FOR CONSIDERATION

BY _____ LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF _____

(Members of the congregation who wish to suggest names of pastors to be considered for our Call List are asked to complete this form. When it is completed, give it to an elder or the chairman of the congregation. It will be forwarded to the district president. Please include your name at the bottom of the form, otherwise it will not be recognized as valid.)

1. Having carefully and prayerfully considered the pastoral needs of our congregation, I wish to nominate the following pastor as a candidate to be considered for a Call to our congregation:

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

2. I believe he will meet our needs for the following reasons:

3. Please state whether you know him personally, where, and for how long a time:

4. If you do not know him personally, state the source of your information on the basis of which you are making your nomination:

I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord. (Jeremiah 23:4)

Name of person making the nomination (please print) _____

I am a member of _____ congregation of

City Province

APPENDIX II

VACANCY PASTORAL SERVICES GUIDELINES

The Office of the Ministry is ordained by God and is not a human institution. God graciously blesses his people and his church with called ministers of the Gospel. He also blesses us with the opportunity to participate in the calling of pastors.

When the Pastor of a congregation accepts a call to another congregation, or retires, and the congregation finds itself without a full-time pastor, the “Pastoral Office” is deemed vacant. A vacancy pastor needs to be selected to fill this office, so that the responsibilities of spiritual leadership, and of Word and Sacrament ministry may continue. The Circuit Counselor and District President should be contacted for assistance in filling this office and in setting out appropriate remuneration.

Congregations will want to remember, even in times of vacancy, the importance and the blessing that the ministry of Word and Sacrament brings to them. In recognition of this, they will seek to provide and prepare for interim pastoral services as quickly as possible. During this time congregations have used, with good effort, the services of retired pastors, pastors on candidate status, that is, pastors not presently in a parish, but eligible to receive a call. We understand that God serves us through the proclamation of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. It is our desire to maintain that ministry of Word and Sacrament as best we can, even when the congregation is without a full-time pastor.

We want to make a distinction between two different levels of service, Level 1 and Level 2. The descriptions that follow should explain the reasoning behind this.

Vacancy Pastor Level 1

A Vacancy Pastor is ordinarily the pastor of a neighbouring parish, and is fully occupied looking after the needs of his own parish, although he could be a retired pastor, or one on candidate status. Usually, the services he is able to render are limited to those that are essential for the ongoing ministry of the “vacant” congregation (Preaching, Sacraments, Catechism Class, Bible Class, emergency pastoral calls, hospital and shut-in calls). Vacancy responsibilities would probably involve worship plus other time in the vacant congregation. In such an arrangement, worship service times may need to be adjusted.

A Vacancy Pastor who assumes the basic responsibilities outlined above might receive 25% for pastoral responsibility, or 40%-50% of salary for pastoral responsibility and actual services provided. If one or more of the basic responsibilities is passed to another pastor (e.g. conducting a worship service), his stipend would subtract from that salary. If there are additional responsibilities beyond the basic, that would add to the basic salary. Other considerations might include secretarial services and other costs to the pastor’s regular congregation.

For example:

40% of salary based on \$36,000 per year would be \$275 per week.

50% of salary based on \$36,000 per year would be \$350 per week.

The vacant congregation may wish to consider providing a portion of that salary to the vacancy pastor’s congregation or an amount over and above the vacancy salary.

Vacancy Pastor Level 2

A Level 2, a Vacancy Pastor would most likely be someone not serving as a regularly called Pastor somewhere else. He could be retired or on candidate status. Since such a pastor might have more availability of time, he could assume most or all of the work load and responsibility of a regularly called Pastor during the calling process. A larger congregation, or one with some difficulties to work through may benefit from having such pastoral service.

A Level 2 Vacancy Pastor who assumes most or all of the responsibilities of a full-time pastor, should be compensated accordingly. Such compensation could include provision for housing and benefits, including Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan. Revenue Canada forms, such as the T4 tax form, should be issued as required.

At either level, the role of Vacancy Pastor should be a salaried position with clear expectations in advance, and not a piecemeal or per item approach. In either level, mileage would be extra (currently \$.31/km in BC and \$.28/km in AB).

Remuneration should be determined by the congregation before approaching an individual and requesting his temporary services. To avoid misunderstanding, it is essential to draw up a basic agreement, spelling out the services expected, the remuneration offered, the arrangement for terminating services when the newly called Pastor arrives. All of this should be done in consultation with the Circuit Counselor.

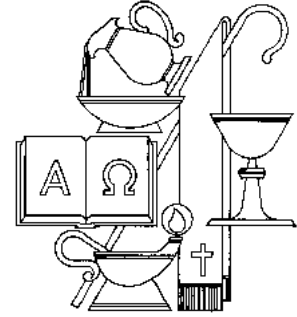
It is expected that someone providing vacancy services will, just as a resident pastor, provide a monthly report of his activities to the church council, informing it of such things as: number of sick or emergency calls made; church and communion attendance, etc.

The vacancy arrangement needs to be reviewed on a three month (quarterly) basis.

APPENDIX III

CARING FOR THE CALLED SERVANTS OF CHRIST

GUIDELINES



Preface

Christian congregations love their Lord and Master, Christ Jesus who said to His disciples after His resurrection: *“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”* (John 20:21) Christian congregations know that God’s Holy Word sets forth basic principles for a congregation’s care and concern for its workers. Christian congregations bring praise to the Lord as they commit themselves to the care and keeping of those servants whom God has placed in their midst.

I. Introduction: The Spirit of the Guidelines

Your Christian pastor responds to the “call” from God with a joyful heart and a willing dedication to serve within the sphere of pastoral duties. As not all of the pastor’s duties are detailed in the call documents or in the diploma of vocation, the possibilities for ministry within your congregations are limited only by the Holy Scripture. The mission vision of your congregation and the talents of your pastor and lay leaders contribute greatly to enacting possibilities.

Your other called or commissioned staff members (parochial school teacher, Director of Christian Education, other) likewise respond from Godly dedications. Their duties may be somewhat more defined by the appropriate board within your congregation. Their commitment is to serve to the glory of God and the Christian growth of persons within the scope of their care.

Your congregation may employ other staff members as are necessary for secretarial, custodial or other purposes. Their duties and time commitment will probably be defined quite clearly. All employees of your congregation, whether called, commissioned, or hired, deserve the care that says: We are all servants of the Lord and we have a mutual concern for spiritual, emotional, and physical well being. Building and maintaining a caring relationship between your congregation and those who serve or minister is vital to the health of your congregation. Frederick A. Niedner wrote:

“Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teaches in all good things.” (Galatians 6:6). To ‘communicate’ is to share. Sharing is a beautiful word that describes attitudes and actions which are mutually supportive. Certainly the connotation of the work infers willingness and joyfulness. The inclusion of ‘all good things’ is the Lord’s way of getting at every positive aspect of a relationship. The context of the passage is one of caring at it’s finest.”

As that caring takes place the whole people of God have the joyful privilege of participating in the ministry of Christ Jesus to the world –beginning right in the home parish. The Bible describes the relationship of the pastor and congregation as mutual love and support dedicated to the mission of Christ.

It would be well to keep this in mind as your congregation considers salary, study, and other appropriate remuneration and caring policies on a continued basis.

II. Caring for Church Workers: Spiritual Concern

The service of Installation for a Pastor might alert us to the congregation’s responsibility in this regard. Note the words addressed to the congregation:

“You have heard the solemn promise of him called to be your pastor. Will you now receive him, show him that love, honor and obedience in the Lord which you owe to the shepherd and teacher placed over you in your Lord Jesus Christ, and will you.... Pray for him always that in his labors he may retain a cheerful spirit and that his ministry among you may be abundantly blessed?” (similar words for those installed or commissioned into a teaching ministry)

“Receive,” “show,” “Pray for” are all action words which note an ongoing concern by the congregation for those called to serve. That genuine concern needs to take some factors into account:

For the sake of others to whom he ministers, the pastor needs to take care of his own spiritual health;
If the religious problems of others warrant his attention, so also do his own;
Because religion is his vocation it can easily be professionalized;
Laities have the responsibility not only to receive care from the pastor, but also to give care to him.

The Apostle Paul bid the church in Galatia to “*carry each others burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the Law of Christ.*” (Gal. 6:2). Shall we do any less? What a blessing when pastor and people strive for and find a joyous partnership in the Gospel of God. (Phil. 1:5)

III. Caring for Church Workers: Emotional Demands

There are similarities between the problems of a businessman and those of a minister. This does not mean, however, that his problems are nothing but the problems of a businessman. William Hulme, a professor of pastoral counseling writes:

“The demands upon the minister are similar to those upon other professional men, but at least in one respect they are unique. The minister is a leader in faith. The qualities for this demand are deeply personal...His leadership in faith is different than having administrative ability, speaking ability, or even personality appeal...The defender of faith would also like to have more support from ‘sight’ ...As a professional religionist, the minister is continually burning his bridges behind him---putting himself out on a limb---in the pulpit, in the Bible class, at the sickbed, and at the graveside.

Your staff members are very much human, with weaknesses and strengths, with likes and dislikes, with physical and emotional needs. You know this; your staff knows this. Sadly, the incidents of burn-out, pastoral fatigue, marriage problems and other symptoms of high stress – coupled with low personal satisfaction in many cases – are ever increasing.

What might be a goal to strive for? You must honestly face the truth if your servants in ministry have problems. You need not, however, dwell on these problems excessively.

You will want to thank God for your servants in ministry. You will want to commend your pastor for his faithfulness. (Please note: God asks pastors to be faithful in Gospel sharing; He, our Lord, is responsible for the success of the Gospel.) You will want to help your pastor express his joys in ministry. You will want to dwell on the blessings which both he and you, through Him, have received from a gracious and loving God.

The preventive medicine of love, care and prayer support which your congregation can offer your professional staff should not be overlooked. Listening to the expressed concerns of your staff and watching for those unexpressed can be vital. An elder’s friendship visit in the staff member’s homes may be welcomed. Your congregation may explore many possibilities for a giving a clear message: “We truly care!”

IV. A Word About Evaluations:

An item that might well be considered is an evaluation process for and with staff members. Roy K. Holm wrote that the purpose of this evaluation might be as follows:

“The review should not be approached with the intent to merely level criticism at one another. It should be an opportunity for a congregation to become aware of its effectiveness in supporting the needs and works of its pastor(s) and staff, and for the pastor(s) and staff to become aware of their effectiveness in serving the needs of the parish. The annual review is intended to be a two way communication...to emphasize areas of strengths and hopefully to forestall problem situations.”

V. Caring for Church Workers: Physical Needs

There are many areas in the physical realm where Christian congregations might bring praise to God as they commit themselves to the care and keeping of those servants whom God has placed in their midst. Salary setting is always a basic concern because the physical and material needs of those called into the employ of the congregation need to be met. There are clear Scriptural principles to be considered.

- ◆ Our Lord said: “*The laborer is worthy of his hire.*” (Luke 10:7)
- ◆ Paul wrote to Timothy: “*The labourer is worthy of his reward.*” (1Tim 5:18)
- ◆ Paul wrote to Corinth: “...*the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.*” (1Cor. 9:14)

Though salary setting is the responsibility of the whole congregation, the voters assembly might well be advised to study salary scales and bring recommendations through a select committee. Committee members should be persons who know the community, economically and socially, and who understand what it will take to permit church staff to live comfortably in the community.

The base salary is a key factor which normally needs review on an annual basis. Special gifts and perquisites (weddings, funerals, etc.) vary so much from year to year and person to person that such income should not be taken into account in budget setting. Nor is a working wife a major consideration.

What shall be taken into consideration is the minister’s ability (likewise the teacher or other staff member), the experience, the amount and kind of work, the purchase value of the dollar, and the financial ability of the congregation. In 1932, sainted Dr. Fritz wrote:

It is a disgrace and a sin if a church that is able to pay its minister a living salary compels him, in order that he may make ends meet, to earn additional money at some other occupation. On the other hand, it is a disgrace and a sin if a minister whose congregation pays him an adequate salary nevertheless spends time which he ought to give to his congregation and for which his congregation is paying him in doing other work in order that he may get more money.

Permit a caring suggestion. If the worker has expressed or somehow indicates an inability to manage finances, might not a trained financial manager be asked to help on a confidential basis. If a professional staff member suffers from financial concerns, his or her ministry might suffer as a result. It might also be noted that the failure to derive job satisfaction is often translated into complaints about salary, persons, etc. Let a caring and loving evaluation committee be very perceptive.

APPENDIX IV

WHEN NEW TO A CONGREGATION IN ALBERTA

(Note: similar document available for B.C.)

INTRODUCTION

Some things in this pamphlet deal with the practical matters of being new in a community. Others are more pastoral in nature. This pamphlet is not intended to replace things you have learned or will learn by experience, nor is it intended as a substitute for other resources and valuable guidance you have already received from pastoral theology classes at the seminary. Don't forget the valuable resource you also have in other pastors of your circuit who will be familiar with local history or regional customs.

Paul said, "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." (1 Corinthians 14:40) This pamphlet isn't intended to nor could it ever hope to answer every question. Rather, dealing with one another in love, pastors will need to consult with their congregation to plan the best course of action in a "fitting and orderly" way.

BAPTISMS

What special customs are observed by the congregation around this important sacrament? Hopefully, someone will be around to advise you. But in case not, here are some questions you might ask:

Are there congregational gifts given to the child (or adult) baptized?

Does the congregation give the towel used in the baptism to the child?

Does the congregation use a candle?

Does an elder assist?

Does anyone else in the congregation need to be notified of an up-coming baptism?

Is there a nursery role in which the child is enrolled?

WEDDINGS

Martin Luther said marriage is both a sacred and secular institution. It's sacred because God established it. Yet, Lutherans did not view it as a sacrament and dispensed with the canon law which governed it, turning the administration of this institution over to "lords and the councils".

Permission to perform marriages comes from the province of Alberta. It is the District President's responsibility to see to it that you receive a Certificate of Registration under the Marriage Act, which allows you to perform marriages. The necessary application will be filled out by his office on your behalf as soon as you are installed.

Marriage License and Registration : In Alberta, these are now combined in one form. The couple is required to purchase a marriage licence from an Alberta Registry Agent and bring it to you. You are not allowed to merely publish the banns. Once completed it is possible to take the registration to an Alberta Registry Agent to speed up the processing, although additional fees may apply. It is a legal document. Don't hesitate to contact the Regional Manager of Vital Statistics with questions. In my experience, they have always been kind and eager to help.

Pre-marriage counseling: There are many resources available from CPH and other sources. The more time spent with a couple before the wedding, the better. This time spent can also be used to explain the meaning behind a Lutheran Christian wedding service and deal with any unusual requests before the rehearsal.

Rehearsals (a good idea, even if the couple doesn't think its necessary)

Bulletins (Does the church provide these or does the couple pick them out?)

Signing of the register (Its not in the Lutheran Agenda, but is usually expected)
Marriage certificate (The Province issues a certificate, but does your church?)
Congregational gift (Does the congregation give a Bible or other such gift?)
Hymns (Will the pastor be singing a solo?)
Receptions (Don't automatically assume the pastor is invited?)
Fees (Does the church have fees for non-members? Members?)
How does the congregation feel about non-members playing its organ?
How does the congregation feel about pastors other than their own pastor performing marriages in the church?
Flowers and decorations (Does the congregation have a policy?)

If you are from someplace where it is a custom to hold a reception in the church hall following the wedding, you will be disappointed to learn that this is almost never done in my experience in Alberta. The receptions are almost always very elaborate, expensive functions held somewhere other than the church. The congregation may not be invited to the reception due to space or cost limitations.

FUNERALS

You probably won't need to find your local funeral directors. They may find you first. Its good to establish a working relationship with them, but be prepared to communicate clearly what you can and cannot do for them. What will be your policy for officiating at the funerals for non-members or people in the community you don't know? Does the funeral home collect a clergyman's fee? How does your congregation feel about the funerals of non-members or people unknown in the congregation?

A funeral director once told me that roughly 60 percent of his funerals were in the funeral home, 30 percent were in a church, and 10 percent had no funeral service. For that 60 percent of funerals in the funeral home, a funeral director may be looking for a local clergyman to officiate - for a fee if necessary. The old saying probably applies, "pick your ruts carefully, because you'll be in them for a long time."

It is possible to have a funeral or memorial service in which the funeral home is not involved at all at the church, depending on the family's choices. The family may pick up the urn of ashes themselves and deliver it to the church.

Some other items to investigate:

Does the congregation have a pall for caskets?
Do you have an organist who can play at funerals?
Does the congregation have customs regarding teas or receptions following the funeral service? Who organizes these receptions?
Does the congregation have a policy which would allow other people to speak at a funeral service besides the pastor?
What customs does the congregation have regarding the urn of ashes from a cremation? If treated similar to a traditional casket and displayed in church, how is this done?
Does the church have a memorial fund? How is this administered?

SHUT-INS

Its easy for elderly members to fall through the cracks, especially when they lose their mobility and are unable to get out into the community or to church on their own. There is nothing more embarrassing than being asked to do a funeral for a member you didn't know you had.

Identify those members for whom it is not practical to make it to church any longer? Where are they living? Where are the local retirement homes, adult care facilities, nursing homes, or Extended Care Units? You can often find these listed in the Yellow Pages of the local directory.

Does your congregation participate in hosting a service at any of these facilities?

Some things to investigate:

Who in the congregation is visiting them, if anyone?

Are they able to get to church if they had a ride?

Are they able to take communion if the pastor visited?

Do they like devotional material or newsletters from the church? Can they read it?

HOSPITAL

New privacy legislation makes it difficult and, in some cases, illegal for local clergymen to have unrestricted access to patient information. Many members of the congregation may still be unaware that their pastor can no longer just walk into the hospital and ask to look at a patient list for Lutherans. The best solution is for members of the congregation to personally advise their pastor when they are going to be in the hospital.

There is supposed to be a pastoral care department in the hospital. Even in small hospitals local clergy may be utilized for this purpose. Find out who is in charge and ask if someone could familiarize you with the hospital facility and anything provided to help you with the pastoral care of your own members.

CIRCUIT MEETINGS & MINISTERIAL MEETINGS

The first priority should be your own circuit meetings with your fellow LC-C clergy. Find out where they meet. If they rotate from church to church it can be a wonderful opportunity to become acquainted with the other congregations in the circuit.

However, it is also be useful and neighborly to introduce yourself to your local community ministerial. The degree in which you are willing or able to participate is hard to predict. But there are some practical benefits to being able identify other local clergy and put a name with a face, especially in a small town. Good relations with them can be important, and you may be viewed with suspicion as the "new kid on the block".

BIBLE BOOKSTORE

Is there a local Bible Bookstore through which you can obtain supplies? It can be helpful to buy local. Although, Augsburg-Fortress has been reducing the amount of the discount they allow local independent book store owners, making it unprofitable for them to deal with Augsburg-Fortress.

Augsburg-Fortress can be accessed directly through their toll free 1-800-265-6397 number. They also have fax and a website: www.afcanada.com

Another Canadian mail -order church supplier is Sperling Church Supplies in Kitchener, Ontario. In addition to their own stock, they very often can obtain Concordia Publishing House (CPH) or Creative Communications stock easily. Their number is 1-888-838-6626.

If you are from the US and want to order materials from the states, deal with someone like Creative Communications or CPH who has a good knowledge of shipping goods into Canada. Otherwise you will be surprised by Customs and Canada Post fees and taxes when you go to pickup your parcel. In some cases, the fees and taxes could even be more than the cost of the merchandise.

OFFICE SUPPLIES

Where do you get your copier serviced? Where do you buy paper? What about buying a hard-to-find light bulb for that church overhead?

Check out the local office supply store. Try a camera shop for hard to find bulbs.
Big box stores like Staples, Superstore, or Wal-Mart carry paper and office supplies at economical prices.

Check the Yellow Pages for copying sales and service, but don't limit yourself to the big, recognizable companies. Sometimes the small independent service man, who was laid-off in the last round of company down-sizing or buy-outs, may be able to service an older machine much more economically.

COMMUNION WINE

Alberta once offered clergy a special permit to purchase wine at reduced costs. It is often possible to buy special sacramental wines for communion through Bible Bookstores. Your congregation may also obtain wine at a local liquor store. Ask the clerk for help in identifying an appropriate wine. One of the fortified wines may be better suited than an ordinary wine intended for the dinner table.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES & SERVICES

Check out the Blue Pages in your phone directory. There are phone numbers for Canada, Provincial, and Municipal governments. If there is a local office, it will be listed along with the toll-free numbers for those farther away. Useful government web sites include:

Government of Alberta - www.gov.ab.ca
Government of Canada - canada.gc.ca

Another particularly valuable website is www.servicealberta.ca

AUTO INSURANCE

You must register, license and insure any vehicle you bring to Alberta within 30 days of its arrival here.

You have up to 90 days to get your Alberta driver's license.

Most vehicles (other than trailers or motorcycles) being registered in Alberta from out of province or out of country, must pass a mechanical safety inspection at a designated Alberta inspection facility before they can be registered, licensed and insured... at your expense. Out of country vehicles must also have a vehicle import form from Transport Canada.

In Alberta you are required to be insured through a private Alberta insurance agency.

The amount you pay for your insurance is directly related to your claim record. *So before you move to Alberta, get a letter* from your auto insurance company (the company, not your local broker) on company letterhead that lists:

The name of the registered owner and principal operator of the vehicle
The policy number
The period of time during which you had coverage and the dates of any at-fault claims.

This letter can literally save you many hundreds of dollars in insurance, so don't overlook this item!

MEDICAL

All residents of Alberta must enroll with the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. The cost is: Singles-\$44; Families-\$88 each month.

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan provides information and forms on-line at:
www.health.gov.ab.ca/ahcip/form.htm

Paper forms are available from Alberta Health and Wellness

P.O. Box 1360, Station Main

Edmonton AB T5J 2N3

Fax: (780) 422-0102 in Edmonton

Phone: (780) 427-1432 in Edmonton

Toll-free in Alberta:

310-0000, then dial (780) 427-1432

711 for TDD for the Hearing Impaired

In person:

8:15 am – 4:30 pm Monday to Friday

Main floor offices at:

10025 Jasper Avenue NW, Edmonton

727 - 7 Avenue SW, Calgary

SCHOOLS

One of the frequently asked questions is "Where can I find out about schools?"

You will need to contact the School District office of the area you are planning to live in.

The Alberta government also has a web page www.gov.ab.ca/home/school_and_students/ with school information which includes: a School District map, a listing of public and independent schools in Alberta, and School District contact information.