



# A GUIDE TO THE MSP

## for Leaders of Congregations and Church-Related Organizations

*Members of Call Committees, Search Committees and Congregation Councils*

Call Process Online: <http://www.elca.org/call-process/>  
Ministry Site Login: <https://webapps.elca.org/call/Login/>

## WELCOME

**Call Process** is a partnership of common purpose as ministry sites, rostered ministers, synod bishops and churchwide offices find ways to mutually cooperate and coordinate their efforts in the call process. This Guide is intended to help leaders of ministry sites (congregations and church-related organizations) understand the purpose and use of the *Ministry Site Profile* (MSP), its two supporting forms and the ELCA's Mobility Database System.

The MSP and other forms that ministry sites will need can be found at Call Process Online ([www.ELCA.org/call-process](http://www.ELCA.org/call-process)). Instructions on how to create an online account, fill out the web-based forms and submit them electronically are given below. The information from your submitted MSP is stored in the Mobility Database System which makes it possible for MSPs to be sorted, studied, searched and shared in a quick and efficient manner.

Leaders of ministry sites are encouraged to monitor the status of their forms online and to actively engage their synod's Call Process Administrator ([www.ELCA.org/Call-Process/Call-Process-Administrators](http://www.ELCA.org/Call-Process/Call-Process-Administrators)) in conversation about their vacancy and search. You can also search and view the array of ministry site vacancies by going to *Current Openings* ([www.ELCA.org/Call-Process/Current-Openings](http://www.ELCA.org/Call-Process/Current-Openings)) – a kind of online bulletin board of ministry opportunities across the ELCA.

## PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

The MSP is designed to stimulate your reflection, to be a summary of the characteristics and ministry of your ministry site, and to serve as the first impression that you wish to give to prospective candidates.

- **INTENDED USERS:** The MSP is meant to be used by organized congregations, global mission sites, and church-related organizations of the ELCA that are seeking to call a Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service. The MSP is not intended for use in searches for other church professionals (e.g. non-rostered musicians,



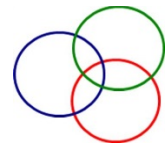
youth & family ministers, directors of Christian education, administrative assistants and the like).

- **AN INTRODUCTION:** The MSP is meant to be a conversation starter or introduction to the life and work of your ministry site. It is not intended to be an exhaustive description of every aspect of your ministry. Focus on the key things that describe your ministry site in order to pique the interest of prospective candidates for call. Give special attention to writing your “Summary Description” since what you write will be featured prominently on the *Current Openings* web page.
- **FLEXIBILITY:** The MSP seeks to encourage your creativity and initiative by offering options and choices for presenting your ministry site. Your responses in the “Narrative” sections should be thoughtful and concise. The “Commentary” section of the MSP invites you find ways to creatively talk about the life and ministry of your site. The optional “Seven Reflections on Ministry and Context” gives you the opportunity to go deeper into some key issues of your context if you wish.
- **CORROBORATION:** The MSP requires that a recommendation be submitted by an outside observer. Choose someone who is in a position to know your ministry and send them the form found on Call Process Online. The reference will be asked to identify your ministry site’s characteristics using the same “Ministry Site Characteristics” survey that you filled out on your MSP. This helps to validate the information on the MSP and gives prospective candidates another perspective.

## DISCERNMENT PROCESS

What is God’s hope and dream for you?  
In what ways are you strong and unique?  
Would your neighborhood miss you if you were gone?

Identity & Purpose  
Gifts & Resources  
Context & Needs



One of the final questions on the MSP asks about your Discernment Process. Before starting to work on your MSP, the leaders of the ministry site and call committee should spend time in discernment. Think and pray about your sense of *Mission* at this time in your history and consider these three things:

- Why do you exist, and for whom? What would someone who observes you from the outside conclude about your sense of purpose and mission?
- What are you clearly good at? What ministry activities bring out the best in you and seem to be valued by others?
- What does your neighborhood really need right now, and how are you helping to meet those needs?

An experience of *Mission* that feels powerful, Spirit-inspired and authentic often happens where these three things converge. That is, Mission is what happens when we are true to our purpose, using our best gifts and responding to the needs that are before us in our community and world. Ministry that only touches on one or two of these things may not be at the core of what your mission is. Thus your prayerful discernment is important, and much of the MSP will give you the opportunity to share what you have discerned.



# STEPS IN COMPLETING YOUR MSP

## Get Acquainted

Before launching into the MSP, it would be wise to take a look at samples of the form. Go to Call Process Online ([www.ELCA.org/Call-Process/Ministry-Sites](http://www.ELCA.org/Call-Process/Ministry-Sites)) and download a sample of the MSP. You might find it especially helpful to answer the narrative questions while you are offline. This way you can work at your own pace and benefit by the spellcheck feature. Later you can block the text and drop it into the online MSP. Remember keep your answers focused and concise – less than 250 words.

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Next, go to Call Process Online and become familiar with the information found on the web pages, especially the Ministry Sites page ([www.ELCA.org/Call-Process/Ministry-Sites](http://www.ELCA.org/Call-Process/Ministry-Sites)). When you feel you are ready, click on the link to the “Ministry Site Profile” in order to create your account.

## Creating an Account

To create an account, click on “Ministry Site Profile” (<https://webapps.elca.org/call/Login>) and then click on the link for a New User. You will be asked to supply an email address and a password for your account. Write your password down and store it safely.

- Next you will be asked to enter information for your account profile. If your site is a congregation, choose “Congregation” and give your ELCA congregational ID number. If your site is a congregation and a part of a cooperative of congregations, choose “Multiple Point Parish”. If your site is a church-related organization, choose that option. Whatever you enter on your Profile page will automatically show on the MSP form that you open. Click “Update” and then “Create a New MSP”.
- You can return at any time to the “Account Profile” screen to update your Profile. Whatever you enter will be reflected in your MSP. Remember to click “Update”.
- Now that you have an account, you will find that the next time you login you will have the option to update your Profile or go to “MSP Status” where you can review your work, update an existing MSP, or manage other aspects of your account.

## Filling out and Submitting the MSP

The MSP is completed on the web; it does not require that you download software in order to work on the form.

- **SAVE YOUR WORK** frequently as you proceed using the “Save and Continue” button on the bottom of each page. If your online session times out, you will lose the work you have done on it since you last saved your work.
- **REQUIRED FIELDS** (marked with **\***) must be filled in before proceeding.
- **TWO USERS:** Congregations must fill out the entire MSP. With the concurrence of the synod bishop, church-related organizations may fill out only Parts I, III, IV.



- **CALL PROCESS ADMINISTRATOR:** At the end of the MSP you will be asked to insert the name of your “Call Process Contact Person”. This should be your synod’s Call Process Administrator.
- **FINAL REVIEW:** When you get to the final page of the MSP you will be prompted to download a PDF copy of the MSP so you can review it one last time.
- **CORRECTIONS:** You can reopen your MSP to make any last corrections.
- **SUBMIT:** When you are really sure your MSP is ready, click on “Submit” on the final page of your MSP. Both you and your synod office will receive an email confirming that the MSP has been received.
- **ACTIVATION:** The MSP does not become active in the Mobility Database System until your synodical bishop approves it, and the *Reference Recommendation* form (see below) has arrived.
- **MSP STATUS:** You can, as needed, monitor your MSP forms by logging into Call Process Online. Click on the tab marked “MSP Status”. Here you can choose to review your MSP, update your MSP, look at the status of your MSP, or request the supporting forms
- **UPDATE:** If you edit and resubmit a MSP that is already active in the system, your new MSP will require re-approval by your synod bishop.
- **ARCHIVING:** Your approved MSP will remain active until you request that it be archived, or the bishop determines that it must be archived, or a year has elapsed since it was first submitted.
- **MULTIPLE POINT PARISHES** are encouraged to collectively complete one MSP. The “Commentary” section of the MSP can be used to describe any unique features of each of the cooperating congregations. If it is necessary for each congregation to fill out its own MSP, then the “Commentary” section should contain the congregations’ collective description of how the parish cooperative functions.
- **MORE THAN ONE OPENING:** If your ministry site has more than one opening to be filled by a rostered minister, you may edit your existing MSP to reflect this second position and then resubmit it. If you need a blank MSP in order to describe this second position, you can download a blank form on your “MSP Status” page. Your MSP Status page will have a snapshot for each of the MSPs you have submitted.

### Some Helpful Tips

- **BE CREATIVE:** The MSP gives you the freedom to add comments, share ideas and passions, and present your ministry site’s gifts. Make your MSP distinctive.
- **BE THOUGHTFUL:** The narrative questions are the most important. It is more important to write concisely and insightfully than to just write many words.
- **BE HONEST:** It never pays to represent your ministry site in a way that will not prove to be true over time. You are more likely to match successfully with a rostered minister if both you and they are honest about your respective ministry, style and gifts. Romans 12:3 is good advice.
- **BE SPECIFIC:** Study the list of characteristics and preferences and focus your answers. Avoid being too general in your responses.
- **SEEK COUNSEL:** Involve as many people as possible at your ministry site in thinking and writing about the questions of Identity/Purpose, Gifts/Resources, and Context/Needs. Begin every conversation with Bible study and prayer. Share what



you propose to submit with the leadership and membership of the congregation. Listen to the critique that is offered. Have the Council vote to approve the final version of the MSP that will be submitted.

- COOPERATE: Never approach a rostered minister directly about your position without first consulting with your synod bishop. Each synod bishop has a shepherding role in call process within their synod that must be respected.

## TWO SUPPORTING FORMS

The various forms that ministry sites use in the Call Process come together to form the Ministry Site Portfolio. The portfolio contains the Ministry Site Profile, the following two supporting forms, and other documents that you may choose to submit to your Call Process Administrator.

### Reference Recommendation (required)

You are required to have someone from outside your congregation or church-related organization who knows your ministry site well complete a recommendation form about your characteristics and ministry. Before having a *Reference Recommendation* form sent to them, you should first secure their willingness to do this. Then return to Call Process Online and login to your MSP Status page. Click on “Request a Reference Recommendation” and enter the person’s name and email address. The system will send the person a request and the login information to access the form. After the person has submitted the form, you and the reference will receive an acknowledgement by email. The form automatically attaches to your MSP. The form is considered confidential. If you would like to review it, please ask your reference for a copy.

### Seven Reflections on Ministry and Context (optional)

You may choose to enhance your MSP by providing additional information on the *Seven Reflections* form. The form is listed immediately alongside the Reference form (see above). While the form is optional, some synod bishops may elect to require that one or more of the questions be completed. Once submitted it automatically attaches to your MSP.

## THE MOBILITY DATABASE SYSTEM

Information found on Call Process forms submitted by Ministry Sites and Rostered Ministers is stored in the Mobility Database System (MDS). The MDS allows users to sort, study, search, and share information in a quick and efficient manner. You are not required to use the current Call Process forms and MDS, but without them your ability to present your



ministry position to the widest possible audience is severely limited. Please discuss this with your synodical bishop or Call Process Administrator.

## Search Applications

“Current Openings” ([www.ELCA.org/Call-Process/Current-Openings](http://www.ELCA.org/Call-Process/Current-Openings)) is a searchable database of information taken from approved Ministry Site Profiles.

Similarly, Bishops and Call Process Administrators have access to a protected search application that allows them to sort, study, search and share information found in Rostered Minister Profiles. This enables the bishop to identify potential candidates for Call to a particular ministry site. While all bishops can view all the RMPs that are available at any one time, bishops have agreed never to infringe on the ministry and territory of another without their prior knowledge and consent.

## Potential Benefits of the MDS

Efficiency is not the only outcome of the creation of the Mobility Database System. The MDS necessitated the creation of an updated set of Call Process forms designed to invite creativity, reflection and initiative. This has allowed rostered ministers and ministry sites to take a more active role and responsibility for their Call Process. It has also increased the transparency of the process. Rostered ministers and ministry sites are invited into a time of prayerful and careful reflection on key topics highlighted in the forms – understanding one’s mission and calling, giftedness and context. In the end a partnership of common purpose is fostered as ministry sites, rostered ministers and synod personnel work together to identify leadership and increase mission.

The Mobility Database System is a complex array of programming and protocols. You are encouraged to offer your comments to help improve its friendliness and functioning.

### CALL PROCESS ONLINE

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631  
[Mobility@elca.org](mailto:Mobility@elca.org)

MDS Released March 2009

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