

What is a Hired Minister vs. a Called Minister and how are the two different?

Hired Minister – is often used by a congregation that is seeking less than a full-time ministry or has needs that do not require a called minister. The minister(s) is hired for a specific period of time, usually a year, sometimes with a list of specific tasks like preaching and pastoral care. Often, the period of time may be extended. In the case of a hired, assistant minister that it is hoped will be longer-term, the period of time may be indefinite. There is no congregational vetting or vote.

Depending upon the type of position, hired ministers may be hired by the lead minister(s) or hired by the board. The process for bringing on a hired position is less complicated and time-consuming than the full search process for a settled minister. The Hired Ministry lasts for as long as the agreement lasts unless the minister resigns before the end of that period or there is a negotiated resignation before the end of the period. In the case of a negotiated resignation, the congregation (and even most of the board if the minister was hired by the lead minister(s)) does not hear the story of what led to the dismissal because of employment law constraints. Hired minister's agreements may be renewed and modified.

Options for hired positions include lead minister and interim minister (hired by the board) and assistant minister and sabbatical minister (most often hired by the lead minister[s]).

Called Minister – this minister is called by the congregation after a comprehensive search process. Called Ministry options include lead minister and associate minister and is considered a settled ministry, i.e., it lasts until the minister chooses to resign, there is a negotiated resignation, or a congregation votes to dismiss the minister (listed in order of likelihood). Information about the reasons for a Called Minister's dismissal may be shared with the congregation.

A Called Minister will likely begin with more congregational buy-in and support, given that members will have had the chance to meet them and learn about their background and skill set, as well as participate in a vote to call, knowing that a search team has done much prior discernment and review of potential candidates.

Called ministry positions include associate and lead or co-lead ministers only. Last year there were a small number of applicants for Called Ministry in Texas, and there were no associate or assistant minister positions posted. This suggests that a Co-Lead position may attract more applicants than an associate position.