



**Association of Lutheran Church Musicians**

**Employment Resources**

## **Steps to finding a new church musician.**

(Additional resources on the ALCM website at [ALCM.org](http://ALCM.org).)

### **1. Lutheran church musicians: who they are and what they do**

Lutheran church musicians lead the church's song. In the Lutheran tradition, church musicians are often called cantors. This includes the roles of choir directors, organists, pianists, instrumental leaders, praise band leaders, song leaders, composers, arrangers, and worship planners. While some are employed in full-time positions, many are employed part-time, and others serve as volunteers.

Lutheran church musicians:

- **Proclaim** God's Word, Jesus Christ, in worship, through music.
- **Lead** the church's songs and hymns, plan and perform choral and instrumental music, and use their talents to lead and grow the congregation's voice.
- **Celebrate** the fact that the Lutheran church is a singing church and recognize that the primary musical voice is that of the assembly gathered for worship.
- **Challenge** and stimulate a congregation by finding ways to engage people of all ages and backgrounds in the church's music.
- **Grow and change** as part of a dynamic, evolving vocation, proclaiming God's Word and celebrating God's sacramental presence.

### **2. Where to begin**

Whether you are creating a new position or filling an existing role, begin and bathe your search process in prayer. Acknowledge that such transitions evoke a sense of communal and personal anxiety.

With the changes to come, it is good to be reminded that, amid all the flux and feelings of unsettledness and upheaval, God is with you and God will still be praised in your congregation as the search process unfolds.

Take the time that is necessary to journey through this process and, as best you can, do not be in a hurry. Breathe, pray, and collaborate with your fellow congregants and search committee members, and trust that the Holy Spirit will guide you to the right person and will guide that person to you. Consider whether a time of interim leadership would be helpful.

Begin conversations about who will be responsible for organizing a plan and timeline to guide the replacement or creation of a new position. Responsibilities may be shared between existing or newly appointed committees. Some or all of the steps in the following process may assist in forming a timeline for your context.

### **3. Affirm transition and closure**

Transitions are holy times in a congregation, and can be joyful and/or painful, depending on the circumstances. A servant of the church is moving on; colleagues are taking leave from one another; the ministry of worship and music in your congregation will be lifted up and evaluated; changes will provoke some to excitement and others to anxiety. If a current musician is leaving, consider bringing their ministry to closure with a public rite of thanksgiving as appropriate. Send this servant of the church's song on their way with scripture, song and prayer; this will graciously assist all with the framework of boundaries necessary for good leave-taking.

### **4. Envision the future**

This is an essential step in the process. Invest the time necessary to have thoughtful conversation about ministry and mission. What role has music played in the ministry of your congregation? What resources are currently available? What is the future vision of music in your congregation? These conversations will inform the position(s) you will create. You can then determine fair and realistic expectations to support the congregation's vision and resources.

## **5. Form a search committee**

In many contexts a search committee manages the recruitment and hiring process. It is important for the search committee to include individuals who understand and support the church's music ministry and vision, and it is beneficial to include a wide representation of the congregation and pastoral leadership.

## **6. Translate vision into a position description**

Craft a position description that attempts to fulfill the needs and desires for music as it relates to the congregation's vision and its mission statement. When considering compensation, keep in mind the local cost of living and commit to providing a fair and just wage. What elements of your compensation package might be variable and negotiable?

## **7. Define application process**

Before posting a position listing, determine the application deadlines and requirements. Consider what materials candidates will submit (resume, video/audio sample, references, etc.). Begin to discuss the interview and audition process.

## **8. Publicize position and receive applications**

It is time to begin recruiting. After posting the position to the [ALCM job listing service](#), consider contacting other organizations and institutions to recruit potential applicants. Will you invite any specific candidates to apply? Determine how applications and associated materials will be received and shared with the committee.

## **9. Review applications**

Read and listen carefully to the application documents and recordings. If necessary, narrow the pool down to a manageable number. There may be one or more applications that rise to the top. If a viable candidate(s) has not emerged, perhaps the description and/or compensation could be revisited.

## **10. Interview applicants**

The interview process will vary in time and scope depending on the responsibilities of the position. Refine common interview questions and audition requirements. Communicate a schedule and requirements with selected candidates.

## **11. Identify finalist(s)**

This step can be complicated. Prayerfully discern which candidate(s) best align with the vision of the music ministry. A single candidate may rise to the top. Several equally qualified candidates may need to be ranked. Candidates may surface who have gifts in areas that were not initially identified as having priority. Be open to the possibility of revising the position description based on a finalist's gifts or supporting additional training.

## **12. Offer position**

Once a decision has been made, make an offer to the candidate and allow time for candidate discernment and possible negotiation. When a candidate has accepted the position, notify other applicants in a timely manner.

## **13. Welcome and celebrate**

Congratulations! Coordinate with the candidate when to make a public announcement. Consider how to celebrate this new beginning—socially, liturgically, and within the community.