

**The Intentional Interim Ministry Program
of the
Pacific Southwest District
The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod**

Congregations during Pastoral Vacancies

When a congregation enters that time of pastoral vacancy, it can panic and immediately begin the process of calling another pastor, or it can treat this interim time as an unusual opportunity for growth. Many congregations have found it is possible to deal most creatively with several life-themes in their ministry and mission. During this period there is an unparalleled opportunity to engage in developmental tasks – tasks that, if carried out well, can lead to greater health in achieving the congregation’s aims and purposes.

Many congregations do not understand what is really happening to them during a pastoral vacancy. Unless they have some sound intentional pastoral leadership, they will not be able to deal with the variety of emotions, power shifts, and unique situations filled with fresh possibilities. Congregations should be aware of issues common to churches that have just lost the pastor, i.e., the grief process following the loss of a pastor, the subtle and not-too-subtle shifts in lay leadership, the opportunity for self-assessment and affirmation of mission and ministry, and the necessity of dealing with unresolved conflicts.

The Intentional Interim Ministry Program

The Pacific Southwest District has developed a program of Intentional Interim Ministry. Intentional interim pastors are trained and certified. They assist congregations in working through all the changes, usually by using five developmental tasks:

1. Assist the congregation to deal with its history.
2. Assist the congregation to discover its new identity and vision for the future.
3. Assist the congregation as it experiences a transition in lay leadership.
4. Assist the congregation to affirm its partnership with the District and Synod.
5. Assist the congregation to become committed to a new vision of its future.

In addition to assisting the congregation through these various tasks, the interim pastor provides full pastoral services during this time of vacancy, giving the congregation a feeling of stability as it moves in a new direction. Sometimes there are very special needs in the life of the congregation that invite the leadership of a trained interim pastor.

Here are a few examples:

1. The congregation might need to deal with deep grief issues after the death of a pastor or a long pastorate.
2. There may be serious, unresolved conflicts that need to be dealt with.
3. There may have been issues following the sexual misconduct by the previous pastor that the congregation should address.
4. There may be a need for the congregation to refocus its mission. There are times when a congregation is in need of restructuring or reorganizing.
5. The congregation may need to closely study its staffing.

The Process of Calling an Interim Pastor

1. The intentional interim pastor receives a non-tenured call from the vacant congregation to serve as pastor for from six months to one year. The intentional interim pastor is called specifically to accomplish mutually agreed upon goals during the interim time.
2. The congregation, the District (Circuit Counselor, Director of Interim Ministry, and District President) and the intentional interim pastor work together to set these goals and to monitor their progress. There will be a quarterly evaluation of the intentional interim ministry program that involves an interim task force from the congregation, the staff assistant from the District office, and the intentional interim pastor.
3. The congregation will compensate the intentional interim pastor according to District salary guidelines. The congregation also is responsible for moving expenses and housing costs. The congregation will need to offer the interim pastor days off and vacation time.
4. The intentional interim pastor will continue to work in the congregation until the pastoral vacancy is filled or following the completion of the goals that are set until he receives another assignment. If mutually agreed upon, he may serve as a full-time vacancy pastor once the interim goals have been completed.
5. When the full-time pastor has accepted a call to the congregation, the congregation will need to give the interim pastor a month's severance pay.
6. The intentional interim pastor should leave the congregation one or two weeks prior to the installation of the full-time pastor. The interim pastor agrees not to be a candidate for the call to be permanent pastor of the congregation which he is serving as an intentional interim pastor.

A Theological Basis for the Intentional Interim Ministry Program

The following is an understanding of biblical concepts for the intentional interim pastor:

Interim pastors serve in the spirit of Titus who was called to the church of Crete with specific goals and for a limited period of time. Paul wrote to Titus: “I left you in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done...” (Titus 1:5).

Titus’ tenure at Crete was limited; he was there according to Paul’s intention and only long enough to work on some specific things and then the next pastor would arrive.

Rationale for the Intentional Interim Pastor Program

The following are some reasons for the intentional interim ministry program that are not stated elsewhere in this document. Some of these reasons were gleaned from Lyle Schaller’s book, *Survival Tactics in the Church*.

1. The intentional interim pastor program gives the members the time to evaluate their mission and ministry, set direction for the future, and, in so doing, clarify expectations for ministry with the next permanent pastor.
2. It increases the chances that the next pastorate will be long (at least five to eight years) and effective.
3. It reinforces the concept of the ministry of the laity.
4. It helps the congregation work on those areas that have traditionally been traps of ministry so that the new pastor can devote his energies to the present and future rather than reliving and being asked to reconstruct the past.
5. It gives the congregation time to respond to grief aroused because of the departure of the previous pastor and his family.
6. It increases the freedom of choice open to the call committee in searching for a new minister. (Frequently, congregations seek a new minister who is strong in those areas where the previous pastor was viewed as weak. The intentional interim pastorate allows sufficient time to pass to reduce this tendency.)
7. It allows the intentional interim pastor to do what needs to be done in the congregation to prepare for the arrival of the next full-time pastor.
8. It promotes healing in the congregation. This is especially true of severely conflicted congregations.

Expectations and Outcomes for the Intentional Interim Pastor

The following are some outcomes that are desired:

1. Work through the grief caused by the former pastor's leaving.
2. Listen to the hurts and ideas of the members, especially those who feel they have been neglected in the past or who feel they have ideas that have not been heard.
3. Rebuild the trust level among the members of the congregation. (This is especially important when the congregation has been divided over issues or personalities.)
4. Help the congregation define its basis for unity.
5. Help the congregation rebuild its foundational base on God's Word and its application to congregational life.
6. Help the congregation to begin to set its future direction under guidance through God's Word.
7. Help the congregation define and recognize the leadership qualities desired in the next permanent pastor.
8. Help the congregation establish expectations for itself in the future and some priorities for the next permanent pastor.

Some Congregational Considerations

1. The congregation, with the interim pastor, should set the job description with a mutual understanding of expectations.
2. The congregation should issue a non-tenured call to the interim pastor and set the Sunday for his "installation" (Litany of Recognition).
3. The congregation should insist that the interim pastor participate in the District pastoral conferences and circuit "winkel" conferences.
4. The congregation will contribute 3% of the interim pastor's total salary to the District on a monthly basis, as stated by District convention, to underwrite the interim ministry program of the Pacific Southwest District.
5. At the close of the interim pastor's ministry, the congregation should work through the evaluation report and send it to the District office.

Comparison of Models

<i>Vacancy Pastor Model</i>	<i>Intentional Interim Pastor Model</i>
1. Rarely serves full-time.	1. Full-time status produces stability and reduces the anxiety level of the people: “We are not without a pastor.” Most evident on Sunday mornings.
2. Has no training and often little or no experience with a congregation in the “in-between times.	2. Has special training and experience; under peer review; participates in on-going required education; certification process; accumulates extensive experience as he works in this specialized field.
3. Often many guest pastors are used for worship services, which provides variety, but does not offer stability to the congregation when stability or instability is most apparent to parishioners through what happens on Sunday mornings.	3. Preaches and conducts bible class usually every Sunday.
4. Word and Sacrament ministry is not brought to bear on “in-between times” issues and dynamics.	4. Word and Sacrament ministry can be brought to bear on issues and dynamics peculiar to the “in-between times” by a pastor who understands what is happening and is able to minister in a timely, sensitive, and relevant manner.
5. Only basic pastoral functions can be covered.	5. Sustains the entire on-going programs and ministry of the congregation; ministry is not put on hold.
6. Does not take advantage of the “prime time for renewal.” Vacancies are often viewed as “not a time to change anything.” “Put things on hold until the next man arrives.”	6. Constructively utilizes the anxiety level of the people to make the “in-between times” a “prime time for renewal.”
7. Has little time to deal with congregation’s grief process, past problems, leadership power shifts, or visioning.	7. Helps congregation and individuals handle their grief over their pastor’s leaving – especially in those instances where there has been conflict or break of trust. Termination Process a. Disenchantment b. dis-identification c. disorganization d. disengagement

Comparison of Models (continued)

<p>8. Has little or no training, experience, or time for dealing with conflict resolution, previous pastoral conflict, sexual misconduct, multiple staff issues, etc.</p>	<p>8. Helps congregation resolve unsettled issues so they do not become baggage for the new pastor.</p>
<p>9. The purpose is usually to help them through a rough time and pray they receive a pastor very soon so they can move on in ministry.</p>	<p>9. Reduces urgency of the call committee to “find a pastor.” There is often a deliberate slow-down of the call process, allowing the congregation to do a more thorough job.</p>
<p>10. Not aware of the five developmental tasks and is not trained to help in these areas. Congregation does not contract with the vacancy pastor to do this work.</p>	<p>10. Intentionally works with the congregation as contracted on the five developmental tasks: a) Snapshot history, a sense of who we are. b) leadership power shifts; c) new identity, vision; d) increased denominational linkages; e) commitment to new leadership and direction which includes:</p>
<p>11. His role is to handle the basic pastoral duties and has no responsibility and usually no time to help the congregation achieve a more objective view of the ministry.</p>	<p>11. Helps circuit counselor, congregation, and individual members have a more objective view of the congregation and its ministry.</p>
<p>12. He has no responsibility for the call process.</p>	<p>12. Helps congregation maintain amore balanced view of gifts needed in a new pastor, especially after a long ministry or conflicted one. <i>(Tendency is to take for granted strengths of the previous man and look for a new pastor with strengths in the areas of weakness. Both congregation and pastor can be greatly disillusioned when this happens.)</i></p>

Stages and Procedures vs. Dynamics of a Vacancy

Stages and Procedures (Cognitive Level)

1. Termination
2. Direction finding
3. Self-study
4. Gathering of names for candidate list, PIF form, SET form, interviews, and “prime list” formulation (search)
5. Call documents
6. Call extended (negotiation/call)
7. Installation
8. Start up

The eight stages of a vacancy listed above are logical description of what transpires in a “vacancy” situation and can be easily understood by most people. Also, each stage incorporates tasks and/or procedures which are well defined, easily understood and is endemic to every vacancy and church body which uses a call process.

Dynamics of a Vacancy (Affective Level)

The dynamics of a “vacancy” are much more difficult to grasp and understand because:

1. They have to do with what is going on inside the congregation and its members (feelings, emotions, attitudes, group dynamics, etc.)
2. Congregation members are too much an integral part of the dynamics to readily recognize and deal with them objectively.
3. Vacancy pastors are neither trained in theory or by practice to recognize and respond to the dynamics of a vacancy, nor do they have the time to help the congregation understand or work through them.

The dynamics of a “vacancy” include:

1. How the congregation functions as a system.
2. How the congregation deals with the termination-time issues and beyond (grief):
 - a. Disenchantment;
 - b. Dis-identification;
 - c. Disorganization;
 - d. Disengagement

3. The level of self-differentiation of present professional staff.
4. How the congregation deals with change: how things stay the same, get out of hand, evolve – their comfort zone, etc.
5. How the congregation deals with conflict.
6. How well unresolved congregational conflict, past and/or present, is resolved before the new pastor arrives.
7. What kind of self-image the congregation has (history).
8. What the church context is (sociological factors).
9. What the congregation's perception of the present and future is (new identity, vision).
10. How well the congregation deals with power and leadership shifts which take place during both in-between times and at new beginnings.
11. What the congregation's attitude is toward District and Synod.
12. What the lay leadership's competency and confidence level is.

Assessing the Need

Procedures

The church council and the district president plan for the pastoral ministry during the time of pastoral vacancy. In the consultation, the church council and/or elders will decide the kind of ministry needed during this period.

Among Considerations Guiding the Decision

- The projected time duration needed to determine the focus and nature of future ministry and pastoral leadership;
- The effect of the previous pastor's ministry and departure;
- A changing context that may require study to determine the appropriate direction for ministry; and
- Any unresolved issues within the congregation.

Varieties

1. Interim pastor

Serves during an intentional interim to accomplish the expressed "five developmental tasks" of interim ministry, along with normal pastoral duties – generally no less than six months, however, no specified minimum or maximum time. Names are provided through the office of the district president and approved by the church council.

2. **Vacancy pastor**

Fills only those needs assigned by the congregation; time and compensation worked out in coordination between pastor and church council.

3. **Associate/assistant pastor**

May serve as vacancy pastor. By nature of his position, he is not qualified to carry out certain functions of intentional interim ministry. It is suggested that this be entered only after consultation with the district president. Issues to be dealt with should include adjusted compensation and careful consideration of implications for successor issues.

Appropriate Candidates for Interim Ministry

Candidates

Ordained persons serving for interim ministries shall have the usual qualifications for pastoral ministry in the LCMS. Proven experiences in congregational leadership as well as specific gifts for this particular ministry also are priority considerations. They should also have the recommendations of a circuit counselor, district president, district vice president, or an active layman.

Characteristics

- Recognized as a man of faith and a communicator of the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
- Awareness of the developmental tasks and the probable unique dynamics of a congregation in an interim period;
- Ability to enable a congregation to sort out a variety of feelings about itself, the previous pastor, the interim pastor, the related judicatory officials, and the unknown next permanent pastor;
- Crisis intervention skills;
- Team building or developing a sense of esprit de corps among those who have been previously divided;
- Organizational development skills including the skills of assessing needs, analysis of situations, developing long range goals, and identifying potential resources for reaching goals;
- Strategies for coping with one's own stress and helping others deal with stress; and
- Participation in a continuing program of growth, evaluation, and development with peers/colleagues in specialized interim ministry.

Specialized Skills

- Pastoral skills in such areas as helping people deal with grief, anger, and despair; healing hurts and divisions; moving person from a sense of helplessness to a vision of hope;
 - A personality that can move into new situations and adapt quickly; relate to the congregation on an interim basis; be able to let go and move on when the work is finished;
 - Administrative skills in such areas as day-to-day operation of the institutional church; planning and implementation of plans; corporate decision-making; the ability to negotiate, compromise, and mediate differences;
 - Experience in at least two different congregations in a responsible leadership role; and
 - Ability to work effectively with volunteers in a church system.
- Those interested in serving in interim ministry are strongly encouraged to take the special training available.

Arranging for an Interim Pastor

Bringing Closure to a Pastorate

One of the responsibilities of a circuit counselor is to assist the departing pastor with bringing peaceful closure to his pastorate. The counselor is encouraged to do this in person, although in some cases it may be necessary to communicate by telephone.

The departing pastor should leave all church records in order. He should provide helpful information concerning those who are housebound, hospitalized, or in need of special pastoral care. If there has been conflict, it would be helpful to know who the participants are. (Note: Recognizing the departing pastor will most likely have biases; his story should be for information only, at this point, and not for action). It may also be helpful to know who the informal leaders are (Schaller's Tribal Chiefs), since these may not occupy elected positions in the church.

The circuit counselor will share all information appropriate to pastoral care with the interim pastor.

Because the departing pastor normally will not perform any official acts once he leaves, the circuit counselor will remind the pastor and the appropriate church board of the need for the pastor to present any future requests for official service to this board before accepting them.

Selecting an Interim Pastor

The district president, with the director of interim ministry, recommends an interim pastor for consideration. More than one candidate may be recommended depending on local circumstances and availability of interim pastors.

The appropriate board may interview the candidate(s) recommended by the district president. The board will make its recommendation to the congregation for acceptance.

Representatives of the congregations and the interim pastor each sign a covenant of understanding outlining responsibilities and expectations each has for the other. This is especially important for multiple-staff situations. *Who's in charge here* is a key issue and must be clearly defined.

Sometimes it becomes necessary for an interim pastor to leave before a new pastor is called. At such a time, the congregation may ask the district president for another interim pastor. The appropriate church board will make the necessary arrangements following this section.

Interim Pastor and Candidates for Office of Pastor

Unless requested to do so by the district president, an interim pastor will not be directly involved with the calling process.

Occasionally a candidate for a call may contact the interim pastor regarding the call process. The interim pastor is free to respond, always remembering to be extremely cautious about influencing the calling process.

Once a pastor is called, he may wish to consult with the interim pastor. The pastor is encouraged to be as helpful as possible.

When the one called as pastor accepts, the interim pastor should begin his preparation to leave. He will leave church records in good order and communicate all necessary information regarding pastoral care to the circuit counselor. The circuit counselor will share this information with the new pastor.

Normally, arrangements for the service of installation are made by the circuit counselor and church leaders. The circuit counselor may arrange for a service of farewell and Godspeed for the interim pastor before the new pastor assumes office.

Additional Pastoral Care during an Interim

During a pastoral vacancy, the interim pastor shall be considered the pastor in that place. Occasionally, it may be necessary for him to arrange for supply preaching or for some other assistance with pastoral care. He is free to make these arrangements with the knowledge and consent of the appropriate local church board.

At the beginning of the interim, the church council or board of elders, go over the Entry Checklist with the interim pastor.

At the end of the interim period, provide for a reflection by the council president or his designee to the district office on the ministry of the congregation and the interim pastor.

Find the Intentional Interim Ministry Agreement ("Agreement") for the Pacific Southwest District of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod beginning on next page.

Intentional Interim Ministry Agreement ("Agreement") Pacific Southwest District of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

By and Between

_____ Lutheran Church, _____ ("Congregation")
and

_____ ("Interim Pastor").

The parties listed above hereby enter into this Agreement so that the Congregation may continue to receive pastoral care and leadership during the time between regularly called pastors. Since this is an intentional ministry, the Congregation Church Council, the Congregation Voter's Assembly, together with advisement from the Office of the District President, shall assist in determining priorities for this ministry.

Term of Agreement

This Agreement shall commence on _____ and terminate on _____; however, this Agreement may terminate earlier in the event that a called permanent pastor has been installed by the Congregation prior to the termination date listed herein. Upon such occurrence, this Agreement will terminate upon the date that the permanent pastor is installed. This Agreement may be extended for an additional period by mutual agreement of the parties hereto.

Obligations of the Intentional Interim Pastor

The Interim Pastor shall be responsible for providing pastoral leadership to assist the Congregation during its transition between regularly called pastors. The Interim Pastor may assist the Congregation in reviewing its history, in recognizing its present strengths and weaknesses and potential for ministry, in developing additional leadership, in reaffirming its ties to the larger church, and in committing itself to a new pastoral leadership and staff. The Interim Pastor may assist the Congregation in dealing with the grief of being without its previous pastor and/or staff or working through conflict, or dealing with financial problems, evangelism challenges, or other congregational agendas which need to be worked out so that the Congregation is better equipped to carry out its mission and ministry with its new pastor(s) and/or staff. He will provide for appropriate closure to the interim ministry.

The Interim Pastor shall provide an on-going Gospel ministry of Word and Sacraments according to the teachings and practices of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. To this end, he shall have all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of a regularly called pastor of the Congregation. His responsibilities shall include the general pastoral duties of the Congregation, such as leading worship, visiting sick and shut-ins, baptisms, funerals, weddings, etc. The Interim Pastor shall be responsible to the office of the District President, the Congregation Church Council and the Congregation's Voters' Assembly, all of whom may provide guidance in his ministry. To this end, all regular meetings of the Church Council and the Voters' Assembly shall provide opportunity to review the interim ministry of the Congregation and the Interim Pastor.

The Interim Pastor is encouraged to participate in the local clergy-support network (circuit) and shall participate in the district structure for the support and training of interim pastors.

The Interim Pastor may not be considered as a candidate for the regularly called pastoral office of this Congregation.

Obligations of the Congregation

The Congregation obligates itself to the following:

- to receive the Interim Pastor as a servant of Jesus Christ, to give him the honor and love and obedience that the Word prescribes, to work with him in word and deed, and to support him with diligent, faithful assistance and prayers.
- to make regular use of the means of grace.
- to set goals, through the Church Council and the Voters' Assembly, for the intentional interim ministry along with the interim pastor and with the advisement of the Pacific Southwest District.
- to participate, through the Church Council, in biannual review meetings with the Interim Pastor with advisement of the Pacific Southwest District in order to evaluate progress toward meeting the intentional interim ministry goals and the five developmental tasks and to determine other actions that may be necessary to deal with transitional issues as they arise.
- pay, on a monthly basis, three percent of Interim Pastor's salary/housing allowance to the district's interim ministry fund for the continuation and development of this program. (The three percent figure was set by congregations at the 1994 district convention.)
- wait a minimum of six months after the commencement of the interim program before a search or call committee will be established, allowing time for the interim process to function.
- to support the Interim Pastor in his professional and spiritual growth.
- to support the Interim Pastor with the following financial provisions:

Salary \$ _____

Car Allowance \$ _____

Housing Allowance \$ _____

Business Expense A \$ _____

Business Expense B \$ _____

Annual Salary/Housing \$ _____ x 3% = \$ _____ divided by 12 = \$ _____ Monthly
Payment to District

Vacation To be computed at the rate of one week for every annual quarter employed, up to a maximum of four weeks per year, including Sundays, and shall be prorated according to the length of employment.

Education \$ _____ per month and one day per month education leave, up to \$ _____ and _____ weeks per year, shall be deposited with the congregation for the interim pastor on a monthly basis; it can be drawn upon by the interim pastor for interim education.

The congregation should consider a severance package at the close of interim ministry period. The package should reflect the current salary and benefits.

Business Expenses A and B will be paid upon a submission of a purchase order of actual expenses. Any remaining funds in the Business Expense A or B accounts at the termination of the contract will be paid in a one month sum as salary.

Obligations of the Pacific Southwest District

The District obligates itself

- to work together with the Church Council and the Intentional Interim Pastor in setting goals for the interim period.
- to meet with the Church Council and Interim Pastor biannually to evaluate progress toward meeting the intentional interim ministry goals and to determine other actions which may be necessary to deal with transitional issues as they arise.
- to provide assistance in finding resources to meet intentional interim ministry goals.
- to provide the necessary training for the Interim Pastor.

Addendum Items (Additional Intentional Interim Ministry Goals may be added here.)

Signed for the Congregation _____ Date _____

Signed for the District _____ Date _____

Intentional Interim Pastor _____ Date _____

Copy distribution:

*Intentional Interim Pastor
Church Office
Regional Mission Facilitator
Circuit Counselor
PSW Accounting*

*PSW Congregation File
PSW Pastor File
IIM Director
District President's Office*

Agreement Guidelines

Introduction

Establishing compensation for the interim minister can be a very instructive process for the congregation. The same process can also greatly smooth the work of the interim minister. It is well worth paying careful attention to this portion of the negotiation.

There are two steps to this process: establishing the parameters of the pastoral task to be accomplished and then attaching the compensation amount to the task.

Step One: Pastoral Task Description

It is frequently helpful to have the congregation describe in detail the pastoral tasks that they desire the interim to fulfill. As a basis, a survey of the tasks that the former pastor performed can be used. If this description is done in some detail, it will aid in the education of the members of the congregation as well as facilitate the decision as to whether the interim pastor works full time or not.

Often a list of all the duties with the weekly hours required for the duties is helpful.

If some duties that had been done by the previous pastor are assigned to others than the interim, the assignments should be specific. "The elders will take care of incoming mail," is not as helpful as giving the assignment to one specific individual. "We'll take care of evangelism calls," is not specific enough to offer accountability.

This discussion of the nature of the task needs to deal with the full pastoral task within the congregation. If full pastoral ministry is not offered to the congregation during the interim, the congregation will want to rush into the calling process and will not sit still long enough for the necessary developmental tasks to occur.

Step Two: Compensation

Compensation is set on the basis of the district's suggested salary schedule. (See pages 31 and following). This will bring the congregation to the level of compensation with which they will deal in the calling process. Set the total compensation first and then use a percentage if only a percentage of the pastoral task is desired.

Make a distinction between compensation and reimbursement for expenses. Automobile expenses and unusual commuting expenses are reimbursement. Housing may be included in compensation or in expenses depending upon the situation.

You may want to use the current district salary schedule to determine the compensation. Figure the total compensation based on the experience of the interim pastor, and multiply by the percentage of time that the task has been determined to take.

Make certain that benefit items such as retirement and health insurance are included in the negotiations. It is not helpful to the congregation to be able to get by with fewer expenses during the interim.

It is also important for the congregation to be aware that the interim pastor is actually furnishing them more than a settled pastor would: full pastoral ministry plus facilitation of the developmental tasks during the vacancy.

Rationale for the Interim Pastor Not Being a Candidate

A question is often raised by a congregation, a call committee, or an interim pastor in words such as this: Why is it considered unethical and not normal practice for a congregation to consider calling a person who is serving in the position of an interim pastor as the new pastor for that congregation?

For the experience of Synod and those persons who have worked closely with the call process, we find that question answered. Following is listed the rationale for not considering the interim pastor:

1. An interim pastor has an advantage over other possible candidates who may desire to be considered for the position because he has more visibility to the congregation. This makes it unfair to others who may be interested in the position but who will not have the same visibility.
2. An interim pastor will always have a following but will also almost always have those who are not favorably committed to him. If he were to be called to be the pastor, there would be built-in opposition from the very beginning.
3. If the decision is made to consider the interim pastor along with the others being considered and the interim pastor does not get the position, there could be hurt feelings that would jeopardize the remainder of his interim work until the pastor is called.
4. If the interim pastor is considered and he does not get the decision, there are already people lined up for and against the interim pastor. Whichever way the decision goes, there will be some of the congregation upset.
5. The congregation itself may pass up better leadership than it is getting, even with a good interim pastor, if it fails to consider a larger number of potential pastoral candidates.
6. Interim ministry is unique, and an interim pastor may often lead in ways that would be acceptable as an interim pastor but would not be acceptable to some in the congregation where he remains as the pastor.
7. Other pastors will know of the ministerial ethics involved and will know that those have been broken if an interim pastor is called. The result could be a lack of fellowship and broken relationships with other pastors.
8. A precedent could be set which would result in pastors seeking interim positions with the specific idea in their minds of putting themselves in a better position to be considered and called as the pastor, thus greatly damaging the whole call process.

There are unusual circumstances when it may be possible to call the interim pastor. Exceptions will be cleared in advance with the president's office. In these unique situations, no other candidates will be considered until a decision is made concerning the candidacy of the interim pastor.

Recognition of an Interim Pastor

The representative addresses the pastor being recognized.

L: Scriptures: John 20:21-23, 1 Timothy 4:12-16

The representative questions the pastor.

L: Pastor _____, in the presence of this congregation, will you commit yourself to this new trust and responsibility and promise to discharge your duties in harmony with the constitutions of the church?

R: I will, and I ask God to help me.

L: Will you love, serve, and pray for these people of God, nourishing them with the Word and Holy Sacraments and lead them in the use of the means of grace?

R: I will, and I ask God to help me.

L: Will you lead this people of God in giving faithful witness to the world and making known the love of God through loving service in this community?

R: I will, and I ask God to help me.

L: Almighty God, who has given you the will to do these things, give you the power of His spirit so that you may perform them with strength and compassion.

C: Amen

The representative addresses the congregation.

L: You, people of God, will you receive this messenger of Jesus Christ, who continues the work of bringing the Gospel of hope and salvation? Will you regard him as a servant of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God?

C: We will.

L: Will you pray for him and honor him for his work's sake, and in all things strive to live together in the peace and unity of Christ?

C: We will.

The representative addresses the pastor being recognized.

L: By your statements of commitment and the affirmation of this congregation, we welcome you as interim pastor of this congregation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The newly recognized interim pastor continues as presiding minister.

Entry Checklist

Review the contract for interim services:

- What priorities have been established?
- Who needs to be contacted in the first few days?
- What resources are needed and available?
- What traditions or practices need noting?
- What worship preparation is necessary?
- What class preparation is necessary?
- Who needs a pastoral call right away?
- When, Where, and what time are council meetings?
- What reporting is expected and to whom?
- After the first month, make necessary contract revisions.

Review official records:

- Obtain and read the congregational constitution.
- Review congregational policies and practices.
- Review official membership records.
- Insure that records are kept up to date.
- Review financial records (budget, financial statements, unpaid bills, mortgage payments, benevolence status).
- Review attendance records for worship and classes.
- Become acquainted with list of leaders.
- Read historical documents.

Get acquainted with the people:

- Visit and/or telephone leaders and members.
- Contact all staff members. Convene a staff meeting.
- Write an article and/or a letter telling who you are and how people can reach you. Announce this at the first service.
- Drop in on groups and committees.

Get acquainted with the programs:

- Find out what is happening, when, and where.
- Ask about plans, traditions, and celebrations.
- Learn the regular weekly schedule with seasonal changes.
- Ask what, if anything, is “just not done here.”
- Check on rituals for baptisms, weddings, funerals, etc.
- What ecumenical and/or community relationships are there? Which need your attention?
-

Get acquainted with the real estate:

- If there is a security system, learn how it works.
- Obtain keys to every door and learn peculiarities.
- Find out about heating, cooling, cleaning, setting up.
- Learn the schedule of use, policies, charges, etc.
- Learn who to contact for emergencies (sprinklers broken, furnace not running, fuse blown, etc.)

5. In looking back at our interim ministry contract and the ministry needs to be addressed, the congregation accomplished the following

6. Areas of concern that still need to be addressed are

Signed: _____

Position: _____

At the end of the interim ministry, please send this completed form to the district president's office.

Departure Checklist

1. Review the contract for interim services with the elders or church council.

- Has everything been completed as outline?
- Are the financial arrangements clear and complete?
- Have the reports been filed?
- Has the *Reflection on the Interim Ministry* been completed?
- Has the president's office been informed?

2. Leave church records and office in order.

- Insure that the parochial records are up to date.
- Insure that benevolences and bills have been paid.
- Insure that the constitution is up to date.
- Insure that the office is clean, files clear, signs changed.

3. Leave an information package behind.

- Leave your address, phone number, and a welcome note.
- Leave a list of homebound needing visits, prospective members and their status, weddings planned, etc.
- Leave a list of key contact people regarding emergencies, events, and/or last minute contacts.
- Leave a confidential list of those deserving special pastoral attention, but do not leave a file listing faults, problems, or shortcomings of members.
- Insure that a package, developed by volunteers, is available for the new pastor. It should include membership roster, constituent roster, leadership roster, financial records, attendance records, congregational constitution and policies, histories, newsletters, Sunday bulletins, key traditions and taboos, church calendar, buildings and grounds information, ecumenical and community contacts (doctors, dentist, schools, mechanics, plumbers, supply pastors, child-care personnel, special tax and vehicle requirements, and whatever else would be useful).
- Leave things the way you'd like to find them.

4. Arrange for an exit interview to share your reflections on the congregation and your interim ministry. The circuit counselor should be invited.

5. Deal with personal matters.

- Write a farewell article or letter of appreciation which could include such things as positive perceptions of the congregation, a welcoming attitude toward the new pastor, and the normal emotions in transitions.
- Clarify your role as being completed.
- Participate in a farewell event.
- Plan for a break before starting another interim position – time for renewal and recover.

Rite of Farewell and Godspeed for Interim Pastor and/or His Family

Rubrics:

1. When set within the liturgy for Holy Communion, this order is used following the prayers or the post communion prayer.

Sit

2. A representative of the congregation comes forward and addresses the congregation.

Pastor (name) and his family are leaving our congregation, having fulfilled the interim ministry needed at this time. We wish now to bid/him/them farewell and Godspeed.

3. The same or another representative of the congregation may make brief comments about the pastor and/or the family, recalling the important events which have been shared with the congregation.
4. A representative of the congregation then offers this summary statement, affirming the pastoral ministry offered during the interim period.

Pastor _____, on (date interim ministry began), we engaged you to be our pastor for this interim period in the life of our congregation. We asked you to proclaim God's Word, to baptize new members into the Church of Jesus Christ, to announce God's forgiveness to us, to preside at our celebration of the Lord's Supper, and to fulfill other important pastoral service. With the Gospel, you have comforted us in times of sickness and trouble and at the death of our loved ones. Sharing our joys and sorrows, you (and your family) have been important to our life together in the Church of Jesus Christ and in our service to this community. God has blessed us with His Spirit in fulfilling this interim ministry, and He has blessed us through you.

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we thank you for (pastor's name) and for our life together in this congregation and community. He has been a blessing to us, so now send him out to be a blessing to others, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen

5. Closing farewell comments may be made by the departing interim pastor and/or family members at this time.
Stand
6. The service continues in the usual manner.

A Litany for the Closure of a Ministry

P: On (date) we shared together in a service of celebration of a new ministry. It is now time to give thanks for the life we have shared in Christ. It is also time for me to move on to the next chapter in my spiritual journey on which the Lord is leading me.

I have found our time together rewarding and memories of what we have shared will always remain precious and meaningful.

C: The Lord is loving to everyone; God's compassion is over all God's works. All your works praise you, O Lord, and your faithful servants bless you. (Psalm 145:9-10)

P: I now ask you for a peaceful release from the call to be your pastor that I may leave with your love and blessing.

C: We release you from your call and give you leave with our blessings and our prayers. May the Lord watch between you and us when we are absent from one another.

P: Let us thank God for these past years and invoke His blessings upon us for the years ahead.

All: O God, you have bound us together for a time as pastor and people to work for the advancement of your kingdom in this place. We give you thanks for the ministry which we have shared in these years now past.

Silence

We thank you for your patience with us despite our blindness and slowness of heart. We thank you for your forgiveness and mercy in the face of our many failures.

Silence

Especially we thank you for your never-failing presence with us through these years, and for the deeper knowledge of you and of each other which we have attained.

Silence

We thank you for those who have been joined to this part of Christ's family through baptism. We thank you for opening our hearts and minds again and again to your Word and for feeding us abundantly with the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of your Son.

Silence

Now, we pray, be with those who leave and with us who stay, and grant that all of us, by drawing nearer to you. May we always be close to each other in the communion of saints. All this we ask for the sake of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

P: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

C: And also with you.

Exit Interview Format

(Especially for use with interims)

Purpose

- To reflect on the interim time; to discern movement, strengths, and challenges.
- To provide the interim with suggestions that might strengthen his future ministries.
- To help church members present become more aware of unfinished business on the interim time.
- To model open communication among church members and clergy.
- To receive a gift from the pastor who is leaving – insights to be shared about the congregation; for the pastor to receive a gift from the congregation.
- To begin the process of closure as together the committee and pastor identify things they may wish to accomplish in the final days of the pastor's ministry.
- Note: This is not a time for last minute "digs" or "put downs" of pastor or congregation.

Ground Rules

- To encourage all persons to participate fully, it is strongly recommended that the session be moderated by an outside neutral party.
- Whenever possible, the seating should be in a circle, without benefit of tables with which to hide behind.
- Questions should be asked with the intention of hearing one another – the pastor the leaders, the leaders the pastor. They should listen to one another. They must not debate or give their own points of view. You are receiving this as a gift.
- Avoid *why* questions as they usually imply some sense of judgment.

Format

Begin with prayer.

Suggested Questions for the Leaders to Ask the Pastor

- How was our congregation different when you came from what you had expected?
- In what ways do you perceive us as being different now from when you came?
- What do you see as our strengths?
- In what things do you feel we should improve or make significant changes?
- Are there some possible new ministries or mission emphases you might suggest we should consider?
- Were there things you had hoped to accomplish but didn't? What might have helped make it possible to accomplish them?
- Are there issues that you have been working on during this interim period that are still unresolved and will require further work?
- Are there issues that you had not addressed during this interim time that you feel the church might benefit from addressing in the future?
- Is there anything else you want to share with us?

Suggested Question for the Pastor to Address to the Leaders

- Having experienced my ministry during this interim time, what suggestions do you have for me that might strengthen my ministry as I prepare for my next interim? (Pastor can ask questions of clarification but is not to make defensive or rebuttal statements.)

Moderator: Does anyone have any concluding comments to make in the spirit of this meeting?

Closing prayer (usually led by moderator): If at all possible, the prayer should be offered in a circle with all holding hands. The prayer can be followed by a doxology.

[Click here](#) to link to the Congregational Guidelines for the Care of Professional Church Workers, (aka Salary Guidelines).