

Interim Ministry Handbook
NTNL, SWT and TX-LA Gulf Coast Synods of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



We don't just fill the gap, we build bridges.

The Interim Period in a Congregation

The interim period is “a time between.” A time between “what was” and “what will be.” A time between resident pastors in the congregation. A time between saying “Goodbye” and saying “Hello.” A time between one chapter in a congregation’s history and a new, yet unwritten chapter. It is also a time of uncertainty, a time of anticipation of the future, a time of preparation, a time of apprehension, and a time of hope.

The interim period provides a magnificent learning opportunity as the congregation lives in between the “already” and the “not yet.” That the interim period is a time of change is a given. With change can come a crisis, and crisis can bring chaos, but chaos is always an opportunity. Interim Ministry can be of great help in the learning process during this period. Interim Ministry pays attention to two arenas of development: parish development and clergy transition. Parish development provides context for clergy transition. Although connected and correlated, parish development precedes clergy transition in the interim period.

Parish development includes “the whole set of knowledge, skills and processes by which a congregation is brought to a better understanding of its ministry and becomes more effective in it and faithful to it.”

Loren B. Mead: *Critical Moment of Ministry: A Change of Pastors*.
NY: Alban Institute 1986, p. 10.

The departure of a pastor means change. Things will not be the same as they were during that pastor’s ministry to that congregation. Change is the “new normal.” The intent of parish development is to enable the congregation to make the transition.

“Change is not the same as transition. Change is situational... Transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation. Change is external, transition is internal.”

William Bridges: *Managing Transitions; Making the Most of Change*.
Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1991, p. 3.

The transition can be accomplished in the congregation through a process that builds a bridge from “Goodbye” to “Hello.” This process involves the eight stages of the interim period and the five developmental tasks in the congregation.

Stages of the Interim Period

The congregation will pass through several stages during its interim period. Congregations that use these stages as intentional times of renewal and re-creation will be more prepared to greet their future confidently. The stages of the interim period are:

1. TERMINIATION

At some point every pastorate comes to an end. Terminations can be happy or sad, loving or angry, long expected or sudden. There are two sides to every termination, that of the pastor and that of the congregation. Farewells must be expressed and the clergy exits.

2. DIRECTION FINDING

There is some confusion on the part of the congregation as to what will happen when the pastor leaves – what to do and how to do it, who’s in charge, where to find help, etc. What needs to be done until another resident pastor is on the scene? It is important for the congregation to work with the synod staff to find out the answers to these questions.

3. SELF STUDY

This is the work of the congregation in assessing who and what it is and what it needs to be in the future.

4. SEARCH

This refers to all the activities that lead to developing a list of potential candidates, one of whom is to be selected to become the pastor. This stage involves getting the congregation’s picture of itself (The Ministry Site Profile) and the pastor’s picture of himself or herself into direct conversation. Finally it comes down to face-to-face interaction – interviews.

5. NEGOTIATION

The negotiations have to do with the specifications of the work, living arrangements, and compensation for the new pastor and family, as well as the relationship between the pastor and the congregation. (In reality much of this is done simultaneously with the decision.)

6. DECISION

The formal decisions involve a vote by the Call Committee, a second vote for recommendation by the Congregational Council, a formal decision by the congregation, and the assent of the Bishop. On the other side is a fairly personal decision by the pastor and his or her family.

7. INSTALLATION

Installation refers to all the activities concerned with getting the pastor on the scene and publically acknowledged as the new pastor of the congregation. This is an event having to do with a congregation’s entry into a new phase of its life and ministry.

8. START UP

The patterns that get established in the first twelve to eighteen months are likely to rule the pastor and congregation for as long as the pastor and that congregation are related.

After this process of congregational self-discovery and self-renewal, the congregation seeks a pastor whose skills will assist the congregation with its self-defined ministry/mission. It’s at this point in the interim process that we move to the second arena of development: clergy transition.

“... sometimes called ‘clergy development’ – is the set of knowledge, skills and processes by which some major assets of the churches, its trained and ordained professional leaders, are matched with positions that most fully challenge their abilities and gifts and most benefit the life of the church.” Loren B. Mead: *Ibid*, p. 10.

In this phase of interim ministry the congregation, whose identity, ministry, and mission have been clarified, seeks a pastoral candidate. The congregation identifies gifts, skills, and abilities needed in pastoral leadership to work within the congregation’s re-developed understanding of its own vocation. Congregational vision and goals determine the pastoral skills needed. For this reason clergy transition is the last piece of the puzzle to be fitted. Again, parish development provides the context for clergy transition – it is connected and correlated to the point that is basically the result of the work done in the Decision and Negotiation Stages and the development task of Commitment to new Directions in Ministry.

Intentional Interim Ministers can help with these transitions. Intentional Interim Ministers have had additional training and can offer special skills to assist congregations in the “in between times.” While providing Word and Sacrament ministry and a full range of pastoral care, the intentional Interim pastor is well suited to lead the congregation through the process that builds the bridge between the “what was” and the “what will be” of the congregation’s life.

Developmental Tasks of the Congregation

Serving as the foundation stones beneath the stages of the interim period are the five Developmental Tasks, which add strength, depth, and stability to the interim experience. These developmental tasks are:

1. COMING TO TERMS WITH HISTORY

What a congregation will be able to do in the future has a genuine relationship to what it has been in the past. We are shaped by our past. The time of pastoral change is a time for the congregation to wrestle with its history, its story, its identity; possible now as in no other time in its life. It can look to the past for clues to the future, factors which might inhibit the congregation or which need affirming. A pastor’s leaving precipitates the dynamics of grief among members. This sense of loss must be dealt with just as surely as a loss in a family. The better the parish works at this developmental task of coming to terms with history, the more likely it will be to free itself to go on building a new future, the more likely to be able to use the strengths of the past, the more likely to get some perspective and power over its characteristic weaknesses, and the more likely to choose an appropriate pastor for a new life together.

2. DISCOVERING A NEW IDENTITY

This is a time for taking a fresh look at reality and working at making adjustments in self image. It is a time for members of the congregation to think about what they actually are and not what they think they are or what they used to be. It is a time to discover what others in the community think they are. This new sense of identity should shape the congregation’s search for new, ordained leadership.

3. ENABLING NEEDED LEADERSHIP CHANGE

During the interim period congregational leaders can be aware of the special opportunities to open doors to new leaders and also to be both appreciative and understanding of those who have been leaders in the past. (Both old and new leaders should be a part of the Call Committee, for example.)

4. RENEWING DENOMINATIONAL LINKAGES

Pastoral change is a time for a congregation to rethink and renew its relationship with their Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Synod staff will be the source of answers and assistance during the interim period.

5. COMMITMENT TO NEW DIRECTIONS IN MINISTRY

Having come through the interim period together, the congregation will have discovered a new sense of self and sense of competence, with a new sense of direction, and with a sense that the new pastor selected fits the needs for the next phase of the congregation's ministry and mission.

"Recent observations suggest additional tasks for the interim period:

- 1) Reduce the level of anxiety and fear of the unknown
- 2) Renew, re-vision, and rebuild organizational structures
- 3) Pay attention to neglected stewardship matters
- 4) Train new leaders and volunteers
- 5) Re-focus spirituality of members to discern the direction the Spirit leads."

Rev. David Pretty, Intentional Interim pastor, ELCA in *Interim Pastor's Start-Up Packet*.

Baltimore, MD: Interim Ministry Network, 1997, p. 2.

Rationale for the Interim Minister NOT Being a Candidate for Call

The following is the rationale for NOT considering the serving Interim Minister for call to the served congregation:

1. During the interim period the congregation often is uniquely vulnerable and therefore develops a relationship based on their need and insecurity. While this can be useful in leading a congregation to prepare for the incoming pastor, it could make for a very inappropriately skewed decision for a permanent call.
2. Interim ministry is unique and an Interim Minister may often lead in ways that would be acceptable as an Interim Ministry Specialist but would not be acceptable to some in the congregation were she/he to be called as resident pastor.
3. An Interim Minister has an advantage over other possible candidates who may desire to be considered for the position because she/he has more visibility in the congregation. This makes it unfair to others who may be interested in the position but who will not have the same visibility.
4. The congregation itself may pass up better leadership than it is getting, even with a good Interim Minister, if it fails to consider a larger number of potential pastoral candidates.
5. If the decision were made to consider the Interim Minister along with the others being considered and the Interim Minister did not get the call, there could be hurt feelings that would jeopardize the remainder of his/her interim ministry until the new pastor is called.
6. An Interim Minister will always have a following but also almost always will have those who are not favorably committed to him/her. If she/he were to be called as resident pastor, there would be built-in opposition from the very beginning.
7. Other pastors will know of the ministerial ethics involved and will know that those have been broken if an Interim Minister is called. The result could be a lack of fellowship, trust, and broken relationships with other pastors.
8. A precedent could be set which would result in pastors seeking interim ministries with the specific idea in their minds of putting themselves in a better position to be considered and called as that congregation's resident pastor, thus greatly damaging the whole call process.

Definitions of Types of Interim Ministries

There are three distinct approaches/models for pastoral leadership during the time of transition in a congregation:

Stated Supply:

Stated Supply Ministers provide pastoral services in congregations where there is typically no active call process or Call Committee. Depending on the needs of the congregation, a Stated Supply Minister may be either a full-time or a part-time position. The minister can be an active or retired, rostered pastor/minister. As a minimum the individual provides worship and pulpit ministry. She/he may also provide pastoral care to the congregation. It is strongly recommended that a Supply Agreement be negotiated between the congregation and Stated Supply Minister.

Interim Ministry:

Congregations that are actively engaged in the Call Process may be served by an Interim Minister. Depending on the needs of each congregation, an Interim Minister may be either a full-time or a part-time position. The minister can be an active or retired, rostered pastor/minister. This individual provides worship and pulpit ministry plus general pastoral leadership. She/he may also focus on specific issues such as stewardship, evangelism, education, transition, development, etc. The negotiation of an Interim Pastoral Ministry Agreement is required.

Intentional Interim Ministry:

A specifically trained and skilled Intentional Interim Minister may be appropriate for certain congregations in the in-between transitional time between called pastors. An assessment of the needs of the congregation done in conjunction with the synod's bishop and staff prescribes the appropriateness and benefit of an Intentional Interim Minister. Depending on the needs of the congregation, a Intentional Interim Minister may be either a full-time or a part-time position. A part-time commitment, however, should be half-time or greater. The minister can be an active or retired, rostered pastor/minister.

This individual provides worship and pulpit ministry, general pastoral leadership, and in addition attends to specifically identified transitional issues in a congregation's life such as conflict, misconduct, or following a long pastoral tenure. The service of an Intentional Interim minister may terminate upon completion of the agreed upon interim Developmental Tasks and any other identified transitional issues, prior to calling of next pastor. The negotiation of a Interim Pastoral Ministry Agreement is required.

Additional References and Links

Recommended Reading:

CALL PROCESS

So You're on the Search Committee, Bunty Ketcham, The Alban Institute

CONFLICT

Clergy Killers, G. Lloyd Rediger, The Alban Institute

Guidance for Pastors and Congregations Under Attack

Discovering Your Conflict Management Style, Speed B. Leas, The Alban Institute

Managing Church Conflict, Hugh Halverstadt, The Alban Institute

Never Call Them Jerks, Arthur Paul Boers, The Alban Institute

Healthy responses to difficult behavior

CONGREGATION ANALYSIS

Handbook for Congregational Studies, Edited by Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley
and William McKinney, The Alban Institute

Life Cycle of a Congregation, Martin F. Saarien, The Alban Institute

Power Analysis of a Congregation, Roy M. Oswald, The Alban Institute

Studying Congregations. A New Handbook, Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson Carroll, Carl
Dudley, William McKinney, Abingdon Press

Size Transitions in Congregations, Beth Ann Gaede, The Alban Institute

CONGREGATION AND FAMILY SYSTEMS

A Failure of Nerve, Edwin H. Friedman, Seabury Books

Friedman's Fables, Edwin H. Friedman, The Alban Institute

Generation to Generation Family Process in Church and Synagogue, Edwin H.
Friedman, The Guilford Press

Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What, Peter L. Steinke,
The Alban Institute

Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach, Peter L. Steinke, The Alban Institute

How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems, Peter L. Steinke, The
Alban Institute

Family Secrets, John Bradshaw, Bantam Books

Extraordinary Relationships, Roberta M. Gilbert, Chronimed Publishing, Minneapolis

The Relationship Cure, John M. Gottman, Crown Publishers, New York

The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work, John M. Gottman, Crown Publishers,
New York

You Can Go Home Again, Monica McGoldrick, W.W. Norton and Company

The Art of Systems Thinking, Joseph O'Connor and Ian McDermott, Thorosons

Seeing Systems, Barry Oshry, Berrett-Koehler Publishers

Creating a Healthier Church, Ronald W. Richardson, Fortress

Intimate Worlds (Life Inside the Family), Maggie Scarf, Random House

The Fifth Discipline, Peter M. Senge, Doubleday

Leading Congregations, Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser, Abingdom Press

INTERIM MINISTRY

The Interim Pastor, Ralph Macy, The Alban Institute

Interim Pastor's Manual (Revised edition), Alan G. Gripe, The Geneva Press

Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry,
Edited by Roger S. Nicholson, The Alban Institute

What is interim ministry all about? What needs to happen during the interim? What should leaders and members expect from the interim pastor and themselves during this transition?

Restoring the Soul of the Church, Mark and Hopkins Laasar, The Alban Institute

What You Can Expect From the Interim Pastor and Interim Consultant, Philip Porcher,
The Alban Institute

LEADERSHIP

Good to Great, Jim Collin, Harper Business

Leadership on the Line, Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, HBS Press

Healthy Disclosure, Kibbie Simmons Ruth and Karen A McClintock, Alban Institute

Leadership Without Easy Answers, Ronald A. Heifetz, The Belknap Press

Leading Change in the Congregation, Gilbert R. Rendle, The Alban Institute

Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders

Personality Type in Congregations: How to Work with Others More Effectively, Lynne
M. Baab, The Alban Institute

The Multigenerational Congregation: Meeting the Leadership Challenge, Gil Rendle,
The Alban Institute

On Becoming a Leader, Warren Bennis, Addison-Wesley Publishing

Good News From Great Leaders, Robert D. Dale, The Alban Institute

Leadership is An Art, Max DuPree, Dell

Ministry for A New Time, James C. Fenhagen and Allison Hahn, The Alban Institute

A Force for Change, John P. Kotter, The Free Press

Discerning God's Will Together, Danny E. and Olsen Morris, The Alban Institute

Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hum, Wess Roberts, Warner Books

The Equipping Pastor, Paul R. Stevens and Phil Collins, The Alban Institute

Leadership and the New Science, Margaret J. Wheatley, Barrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

A Simpler Way, Margaret J. Wheatley, Barrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

SELF CARE

Clergy Self Care, Roy Oswald, The Alban Institute

Finding a balance for effective ministry

A Time for Healing, Jody Seymour, Judson Press

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Clergy Sexual Misconduct: A Systems Perspective

Nancy Myer Hopkins, Alban Institute (1993)

The Congregation Is Also a Victim: Sexual Abuse and Violation of Pastoral Trust,

Nancy Myer Hopkins, The Alban Institute

Restoring the Soul of A Church: Congregations Wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct, Mark Laasar and Nancy
Hopkins, The Alban Institute

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Discover Your Spiritual Type: a Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth,

Corinne Ware, The Alban Institute

Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy, Donald R. Hands and Wayne L. Fehr, The Alban Institute

A new psychology of intimacy with God, self, and others

Gospel-Centered Spirituality, Allan H. Sagar, Augsburg Fortress

STEWARDSHIP

Giving to God: The Bible's Good News About Living a Generous Life, Mark Allen Powell, Eerdmans Press

Creating Congregations of Generous People, Michael Durall, The Alban Institute

Financial Meltdown in the Mainline?, Loren Mead, The Alban Institute

More Than Money Portraits of Transformative Stewardship, Patrick H. McNamara, The Alban Institute

Plain Talk About Churches and Money, Dean Hoge, Patrick McNamara, and Charles Zech, The Alban Institute

Ask, Thank, Tell: Improving Stewardship Ministry in Your Congregations, Charles Lane, Augsburg Fortress

TRANSFORMATION

Feeding the Flock: Restaurants and Churches You'd Stand In Line For, Russell Chandler, The Alban Institute

Pastoral Stress - Sources of Tension, Resources for Transformation, Anthony G. Pappas, The Alban Institute

Small Groups in the Church: a Handbook for Creating Community, Thomas G. Kirkpatrick, The Alban Institute

The Once and Future Church: Reinventing The Congregation for a New Mission Frontier, Loren B. Meade, The Alban Institute

Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders, Charles M. Olsen, The Alban Institute

Transforming Congregations for The Future, Loren B. Meade, The Alban Institute

Revitalizing Congregations, William O. Avery, The Alban Institute

TRANSITION

Critical Moment of Ministry: A Change of Pastors, Loren B. Mead, The Alban Institute

Managing Transitions : Making the Most of Change, William Bridges, Business and Management

New Beginnings: The Pastorate Start-Up Workbook, Roy Oswald, The Alban Institute

Pastoral Transitions: from Endings to New Beginnings, William Bud Phillips, The Alban Institute

Running Through the Thistles, Roy M. Oswald, The Alban Institute

Listening Ministry, Susan K. Hedahl, Augsburg Fortress

The In-Between Church: Navigating Size Transition, Alice Mann, The Alban Institute

Critical Moment of Ministry, Loren B. Mead, the Alban Institute

Pastoral Transition, William Bud Phillips, The Alban Institute

Useful Links:

The Interim Ministry Association of the ELCA - www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Ministry/Interim-Ministry-Association.aspx

ELCA Call Process - www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Vocation/Rostered-Leadership/Call-Process.aspx

The National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors - www.nalip.net

The Interim Ministry Network - www.imnedu.org