

RATIONALE FOR USE OF INTERIM PASTORS

The story of the people of Israel wandering in the wilderness to the promised land describes in part the time of transition we call the interim period.

For a congregation, this is often a scary and exciting time. Like Moses, a trained interim pastor has the skills and knowledge to help lead the congregation through the wilderness of transition to the promised land of the new pastor. The process of transition can be anywhere from eight to eighteen months under normal circumstances and needs someone who has special skills and gifts to guide the congregation through it.

The following represents many of the ways a trained interim pastor can be of benefit to a congregation in the interim period:

1. Providing Stability: Consistent week-to-week pastoral leadership:
 - Listening
 - Preaching—designed to meet the special needs of the interim
 - Guidance—helping the congregation/session to understand the natural shifting of leadership, which occurs in the interim time.
 - Pastoral care
 - Administrative—working with the session and committees
 - Conflict management—if needed to help in congregational healing

2. Helping to Examine “Who We Are” as a Congregation:
 - Our Past
 - a. Looking at past patterns and evaluating their impact.
 - b. Discovering our strengths and weaknesses.
 - c. Celebrating our history; sharing our story.
 - Our Present
 - a. Identifying and celebrating our success.
 - b. Working through our common grief.
 - c. Listening for concerns/issues, and guiding in mutual problem solving.

3. Helping to Discover Options for Change:
 - To suggest and be open to suggestions for trying new ideas/things in the life and ministry of the congregation.
 - To enable changes in those discovered patterns, which the session has found not to be successful or helpful in the past.

4. Helping to Explore “What We Want to Be”:
 - Clarifying the vision of who we can be.
 - Keeping their vision before the congregation.
 - Looking beyond the former pastor and the interim pastor to be the one who is to come and preparing the congregation for the new pastor’s arrival.

5. Helping to Strengthen Denominational Linkage:
 - To help guide the session/congregation through the Presbyterian search process in partnership with the Committee on Ministry Liaison assigned.
 - To strengthen the congregation’s appreciation and relationship to its denomination—by calling upon its resources in conflict management, stewardship, Christian Education, etc., and becoming more visible.

The Developmental Tasks of Intentional Interim Ministry Are:

1. Coming to Terms with History
2. Discovering a New Identity
3. Facilitating Shifts in Power
4. Rethinking Denominational Relationships
5. Commitment to New Leadership and to a New Future