

South Dakota Synod ELCA

Manual for Congregations in Transition

(August 2009)

The Need for Interim Ministry

Life is a series of transitions from birth to death. At best, transition, though painful, can provide individuals and communities with a time of reflection, vision and opportunity to effect creative change. At worst, transitions can be disruptive and discouraging, leaving individuals and/or communities drained of spirit or hope. In all instances, transitions are made easier if there is a system of nurture and support in place to assist, coach, mentor or advise the individual and/or community through the time of transition. For individuals this support and nurture may come from parents, friends, partners and/or colleagues. For communities this support and nurture is more formalized and may be provided by someone who is appointed, elected or hired to assist the community in transition. When a pastor leaves a congregation, for whatever reason, the congregation experiences a loss. This loss, when acknowledged, can best be resolved during the time of transition before a new pastor is called and installed. An interim pastor, appointed by the bishop, in consultation with the church council, will provide support and nurture when needed during the transition by assisting, coaching, mentoring and/or advising the congregation during its transition period.

The Purpose of Interim Ministry

The purpose of Interim Ministry is to provide word and sacrament ministry and appropriate effective pastoral leadership from the time the current pastor leaves and the arrival of a new pastor. There are two general types of interim ministry.

Supply Interim—a typical interim usually follows pastoral retirement or resignation. The basic interim ministry tasks are coupled with the Synod's Support to Ministries Committee process and will be the interim's primary focus.

- May not serve full time
- Has little or no training in transition facilitation.
- Often only covers basic pastoral functions.
- May not be aware of the issues surrounding the congregation.
- Rarely deals with grief processes.

Intentional Interim—an intentional interim follows a pastoral retirement or resignation that was preceded by a long and difficult period of congregational conflict or as a result of a disciplinary action. An intentional interim is also appropriate following an unusually long and successful ministry by the former pastor. Experience has shown that these and similar situations need to be addressed in an ***intentional*** way in order that the congregation can move forward with confidence.

- Part-time to full-time status provides stability and reduces anxiety.
- Has special training and experience in effective transition facilitation.
- Helps make the transition time an ideal time for dramatic renewal.
- Can deal with past problems, creating stronger internal structure and visioning.
- Helps congregations and individuals handle their grief - especially in instances where there has been conflict or breach of trust.

The Interim Pastor

Interim Ministry is a specialized form of the ordained clergy. An Interim Pastor comes from the roster of ordained clergy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) or denominations with which we share ordained leadership.

The Tasks of Interim Ministry

1. The Interim Pastor encourages the congregation to review its history and evaluate it. It is a time to analyze present realities and real possibilities for ministry and mission.
2. When a pastor leaves a congregation, new patterns of lay involvement often arise. Persons who have been actively involved may step back; others may step forward. Thus, the interim period can be a time when development and preparation of lay leadership calls for special attention.
3. The interim period usually brings a congregation into a closer and more frequent contact with the Bishop, the synodical staff, and churchwide resources. Through the call process, the congregation has the opportunity to evaluate and recommit to its relationship with the South Dakota Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and other churchwide expressions.
4. During the interim ministry period, a congregation can ready itself spiritually in order to enter into partnership with a new pastoral leader. Renewed commitment to the Gospel is a primary goal in the time of transition.
5. The Interim Pastor helps the congregation to work with the changes in lay leadership that often comes with a change in pastoral leadership. This transition time can serve as a time to bring closure to the previous pastoral leadership and to enable the congregation to welcome new leadership with openness and vision.
6. The Interim Pastor assists the congregation in developing an awareness of its own style and gifts within its membership that will continue and expand the parish's well being.
7. The Interim Pastor with his/her own style of ministry opens up the possibilities for the congregation to accept and welcome other styles of pastoral ministry.
8. The Interim Pastor may be asked by the bishop to assist in the Support to Ministries process and development of the congregational mission profile.
9. The Interim Pastor carries out the responsibilities as stated in the Covenant For Interim Pastoral Ministry.

THE PROCESS OF APPOINTMENT TO INTERIM MINISTRY

1. When a pastoral vacancy occurs, the congregational leadership informs the Synodical Bishop's office.
2. The Bishop or representative of the Bishop consults with the congregational leadership to determine the needs of the congregation during the interim and how best to arrange for continuing pastoral leadership during the transition period. In congregations where there is multiple staff and other clergy under call, this consultation will seek to involve these persons in determining the needs for interim leadership.
3. The Bishop selects and recommends an interim pastor.
4. Once the Interim Pastor has been selected and appointed, the Interim Pastor works under an agreement called an Interim Covenant (see appendix G), that is developed in consultation with the Bishop's Office and the congregation leadership. This Covenant includes:
 - a. Mutual agreement of pastor and congregation to fulfill the goals of the congregation and stay within the guidelines of the constitution and by-laws of the ELCA.

- b. The Interim Pastor’s duties include a working relationship with the congregation’s staff.
 - c. The congregation’s responsibility includes compensation to the Interim Pastor. Salary is based on the salary package of the former pastor.
 - d. The synod’s responsibilities to the congregation and the Interim Pastor.
 - e. A time frame in which the Interim Ministry will be completed.
5. The Interim Pastor will be in close contact with the Synod Staff and the congregational leadership throughout the interim. The Interim Pastor will provide quarterly progress reports (see appendix B), attend the monthly Synod Interim Ministry Gatherings and participate in a mutual mentoring relationship.
 6. The Synod will provide a general orientation to interim ministry for all new interim clergy, including an understanding of the difference between interim ministry and settled ministry.
 7. The Interim Pastor **will not** be available as a candidate for a regular call to the congregation.
 8. It is recommended that the congregation establish an interim mutual ministry committee as a way to support the interim pastor and as a means to enhance communication in this time of transition.
 9. The Interim Pastor’s tenure will be complete when a new pastor has accepted the Call to be pastor of the congregation.
 10. In order to acknowledge the beginning and completion of the interim process, the congregation will include litanies of welcome and farewell to the interim pastor during worship.

“Why Can’t We Call Our Interim Pastor?”

1. The essential tasks that need to be addressed during an interim period may not get the attention that they really need. For example, calling the Interim might interfere with doing the necessary grief work regarding the loss of a former pastor. Also, an Interim Pastor may need to do some things in the interim period that he/she would not do if anticipating the roles as the “permanent, settled pastor.”
2. The Interim has a leading advantage over other persons who might be interested in the vacancy. This raises a question of fairness of all prospective candidates.
3. While the Interim may be favorable to most members—some may have developed some dislikes. This raises the concern about a built in resistance right from the start.
4. If the Interim is considered along side other candidates and then not chosen, this could cause hurt and also a “Lame Duck” conclusion of the Interim’s pastorate.
5. Such a practice could put into motion the idea that Interim Ministry is just a stepping stone in the call process.
6. Calling a trained interim specialist and his/her acceptance would remove this person from the small pool of people who are trained and able to serve in this capacity as an interim.
7. The Interim Pastor is a member of a network of people who have mutually agreed to this principle. To accept such a call would be perceived as the Interim going against his/her world.

Note: The material for this manual was taken from the ELCA web site, ELCA Synod web sites, and South Dakota Synod Interim Ministry documents.

LITANY OF WELCOME

L: A church family is constantly changing. Loved ones come to the end of their lives. Individuals come and go in our church life. It is important and good that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings.

Today we share the time of welcome with Pastor _____ whose time as our Interim Pastor begins.

Pastor _____, in the presence of this congregation will you commit yourself to this new trust and responsibility, and promise to fulfill your duties in harmony with the constitution of this church.

P: 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 Sacraments and lead them forward during this important time of change?

P: I will and I ask God to help me.

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

P: 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 the Holy Spirit so that you may perform them with strength and compassion.

Congregation: Amen.

L: I ask all of you, people of this congregation, will you receive this messenger of Christ, Pastor _____, who continues the work of bringing the Gospel of hope and salvation. Will you regard him/her as a fellow servant of Christ and work with him/her in the ministry of this congregation?

Congregation: We will!

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

Congregation: We will!

L: By your statements of commitment and 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.

Congregation: Amen.

INTERIM PASTOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT

From: _____ To: _____

Pastor _____ **Congregation:** _____

1. What are the major issues confronting the congregation? How is the congregation dealing with those issues?
2. What new issues have surface in the past quarter?
3. What is the most important thing that happened this quarter in the congregation?
4. What change has occurred in the congregation since your last report?
5. Where is the congregation in the call process?
6. Is there anything with which the synod staff can assist you?
7. Will this assignment end as covenanted? ____ be extended? ____ be terminated early? ____

Why? _____

Please mail to: The Bishop or the Assistant to the Bishop serving your parish.

INTERIM PASTOR EXIT REPORT

Interim Pastor _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Congregation Served _____

Address of Congregation _____

Reason for Interim _____

Interim Served From _____ To _____

Summary of situation when you arrived:

Summary of present status of congregation:

Summary of interim experience:

What difficulties were dealt with during the transition period?

How might the synod staff have provided additional support during this transition period?

Additional comments:

What is your earliest day of availability for the next assignment: _____

Date: _____ Signed: _____

Please mail to: The Bishop or the Bishop's Assistant serving your congregation.

Appendix D

EVALUATION OF THE INTERIM PASTOR

Please complete the following evaluation so that the synod, through the bishop and the bishop's staff, can best provide assistance to you and other congregations entering pastoral vacancies. This information will be shared with the interim pastor to help provide growth in ministry skills and insight.

Congregation _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Interim Pastor _____

Length of time serving your congregation _____

1. A. Under the covenant established with the interim pastor, what were the specific expectations and responsibilities, as you understood them? List below.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

B. How were these expectations and responsibilities met?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

2. Were there any need services that you feel were neglected during the interim pastor's ministry?

3. In your words, describe the work of this interim pastor among the people of your congregation?

4. Other Comments:

Return this form to the congregational council president. After all forms are gathered from council members, the council president will forward them to the synod office.

LITANY OF FAREWELL

L : A church family is constantly changing. Individuals come and go in our church life. It is important and good that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we share the time of farewell with Pastor _____ whose time as our interim pastor ends.

Pastor: I thank the congregation of _____ Church, its members and its friends, for the love, kindness and support shown me over these last months. I am grateful that you have accepted my leadership. With joy I recall the many things we have been able to accomplish together.

Congregation: We receive your thankfulness. We accept that you now leave us to minister the gospel elsewhere. We express our gratitude for your time among us. Your influence on our lives will not leave us even though you depart from us.

Pastor: I trust that our time together and our part are pleasing to God and the Lord Jesus Christ whom we are called to serve.

L: Do you the members and friends of _____ Church now release Pastor _____ from the duties of interim pastor?

Congregation: We do, with the help of God.

L: Do you offer your encouragement for Pastor _____'s Continuing ministry?

Congregation: We do, with the help of God.

L: Do you, Pastor _____ release _____ Church from turning to you and depending on you?

Pastor: I do with the help of God.

L: Will you pray for the continuing ministry at _____ Church?

Pastor: I do with the help of God.

L: Let us pray

Congregation: God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future which rests in your care. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and disappointments. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories but now move in new directions, until that time to come when we are completely one with you and with each other, in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

L: Go, now, Pastor _____, surrounded by our love and led by the promises of God, the presence of Jesus Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD

**LETTER OF APPOINTMENT
AND COVENANT
FOR**

**INTERIM
PASTORAL MINISTRY**

(name of interim pastor)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our ministry comes from Christ through the church and belongs to the whole people of God. The gospel calls all Christians to serve as ministers in word and deed, sharing God's reconciling love. So it is the privilege of every Christian to be a steward of the gospel of God's reconciling love. The whole church ministers as it celebrates God's presence, shares the good news, cares for those in need and witnesses to the power of God's love.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America holds the congregation and the office of ordained ministry in high regard. Consequently this church body invests substantial resources in support of the congregations during times of change in pastoral leadership. The congregation council and the synod bishop plan for pastoral ministry during the time of pastoral vacancy.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America provides for the appointment of interim pastors by the synod bishop with the consent of the congregation council. [See C9.06 and C9.07 of Model Constitution]

The interim pastor ensures the integrity of the Word and Sacrament ministry and provides the following:

- ❖ Enabling transition from then extended service of a previous pastor to the succeeding pastor.
- ❖ Helping congregations that have recent or long-term histories of conflict or face a particular crisis.
- ❖ Expediting any special transition the congregation must make as it reacts to a changing environment.
- ❖ Providing ministry at a time when the congregation is open to reflection and change.
- ❖ Matching the special skills of a particular pastor with the special needs of a congregation in transition.

COVENANT

WE AGREE TO:

- A. Receive you as our interim pastor, uphold you in prayer and accord you our love, respect and good will.
- B. Accord you all the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor during the interim period; and understand that the synod interim pastor may delegate the same in part to a “vacancy-supply pastor” with the consent of the bishop of the synod. [See C9.07 of Model constitution.]
- C. Look to you to preside at baptisms, celebrations of Holy Communion, and all other rites of the church.
- D. Receive your pastoral and administrative leadership for the various meetings, activities and organizations of the congregation.
- E. Not consider you as a candidate for regular call to this congregation during and immediately after your time of interim service.
- F. Refrain from asking you to involve yourself in our call process except as requested by the synod bishop or his representative.
- G. Help you begin your exit period when the call process for a regularly called pastor is well under way.
- H. Honor the normal work-week for an interim pastor which is similar to a regularly called pastor, usually five days per week. [See synod guidelines]
- I. Contract with you during your six-week entry period regarding specific goals on which we will work together during this interim period.

WE TOGETHER WILL:

- A. Examine the history of the congregation and work through the transition emotions that usually follow the departure of a pastor.
- B. Seek to confirm and identify current issues facing the congregation and develop ways of dealing with them.
- C. Develop a vision for the interim period and provide leadership to complete this mission.
- D. Examine the congregation’s linkage with conference, synod, churchwide units, and the resources that may be available for our ministry.
- E. Prepare for the arrival of the new pastor.
- F. Subscribe to the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to the constitution(s) and bylaws of the congregation(s).

G. During the interim, agree to address the following concerns:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

COVENANT

WE ALSO AGREE TO:

1. Pay you a salary of \$ _____ per month consistent with the South Dakota Synod Guidelines, and our present budgeting for the position you are filling.
2. Provide for your interim site housing with: (Please check one, whichever applies)
_____ a parsonage including all necessary utilities; or
_____ another temporary residence free of charge and pay all necessary utilities.
_____ housing allowance \$ _____ per month
3. Pay a Social Security reimbursement in the amount of _____ per month.
4. Provide for pension, disability and medical-dental coverage through the ELCA plan in the amount of _____ per month.
5. Grant you 6 days and 1 Sunday of sabbatical/vacation leave within each 10 weeks of interim service; taken at your discretion at a time causing minimum disruption for the congregations schedule.
6. Grant you continuing education leave as negotiated with the interim pastor and council president.
7. Pay out a travel reimbursement of _____ cents per mile (or IRS rate) for travel related to our common ministry.
8. Pay you the same mileage rate to and from your home base for a trip home every other week and one vacation week trip within each 10 weeks of interim service.
9. Pay expenses, not otherwise provided for, incurred in attending Synod Assemblies, Conference Meetings, Pastor's Conferences and other official meetings at which your attendance is required as pastor of this congregation.
10. Pay your moving expenses as follows:
 - a. ENTRY: Mileage from home base or last interim site; plus the cost of a U-Haul type vehicle, if needed, at the discretion of the interim pastor.
 - b. EXIT: Mileage to home base if not paid by the next interim site; plus the cost of a U-Haul type vehicle, if needed, at the discretion of the interim pastor.

In testimony of the COVENANT, we have subscribed our names of this _____ day of _____, 20_____.

(President)

(President – multiple congregation parish)

(Council Member)

(Council Member)

COVENANT

Accordingly, _____
Congregation Council(s) and the Bishop of the South Dakota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America appoint you to serve as

INTERIM PASTOR OF

From _____ to _____

According to the following conditions and mutual covenants as described in the accompanying
COVENANT to this LETTER OF APPOINTMENT.

Please acknowledge receipt of this Letter of Interim Appointment and the following Covenant
for Intentional Interim Pastoral Ministry. As you consider this appointment, may the Holy Spirit
guide you.

It is sincerely hoped that you may find it to be in accordance with God’s will to give this
appointment your immediate and affirmative response.

This appointment will terminate when a new pastor has accepted a regular call to this parish or
may be terminated by the interim pastor, congregation council, or the synod bishop with the
appropriate 30 days notice.

We pledge you our prayers, our love, our esteem, and our personal support. In testimony to this
appointment, we have subscribed our names on the _____ day of _____, 20____.

(President)

(President – multiple congregation parish)

(Council Member)

(Council Member)

Correspondence should be sent to: _____

Telephone: (____) _____ (home)
(____) _____ (cell)

Email: _____

ATTESTED BY: _____ (Date) _____
(Bishop of the South Dakota Synod)

ACCEPTED BY: _____ (Date) _____
(Interim Pastor)

DOCUMENTS FOR INTERIM MINISTRY ORIENTATION

To be provided by the Congregation

Please find current copies of the following and leave in a pile in Pastor's office.

1. **Picture Directory and Membership list** – most recent, delete deceased, transfers
2. **Rosters of Council Members, Boards, Committees, WELCA officers, Youth leaders etc.**
- names, positions, phone numbers home and work, email addresses
3. **Constitution and Bylaws** – and continuing resolutions if any, organizational/ flow chart if available
4. **Council Minutes** – last few months
5. **Financial Reports** – last few months
6. **Congregational Policies and Routines**
 - Personal/Staff
 - Weddings, Receptions, Funerals, Baptisms, etc.
 - Wedding booklet forms, etc.
 - Building usage, Memorial Funds et al., Information about keys, building security / also parsonage
 - Instructions about sound system, heating and AC
7. **Job Descriptions** for each staff member
8. Most recent **Annual Report**
9. **Church Histories, Anniversary Booklets**, etc.
10. Last two **Newsletters**
11. Sampling of **Worship, Bulletins** – last 5 Sundays, also list Worship Books, formats traditions
12. **WELCA** – most recent annual booklet
13. **Roster of Nursing Home and Homebound** – members names, addresses, phone numbers, also list of those who have recently lost a loved one
14. **City Map, County Map, Most Recent Rural Directory**
15. **Letterhead, Envelopes** in desk drawer
16. **Roster of Confirmation Students** – name, grade, address, hone, material,
17. **Information on Endowment, Trust Fund, Cemetery committees**, etc.
18. **Schedule of Conference Events** or other dates
19. **Calendar of Regular Meetings and Programs**; upcoming Weddings
20. **Calendar of Special Events** – monthly and annual events
21. A copy of Support to Ministry “Congregational Profile” if available
22. **Current Mission Statement** – and list of current long range goals/objectives if available
23. **List of places where church does business** – i.e. office supply, groceries, et al
24. **List of other churches in community** – ecumenical relationships, services
25. **Community information** – schools, medical services, care centers, funeral homes
26. List of people upset/hurting and/or overjoyed with previous pastor's leaving
27. Whatever else a new pastor might need to know