

Interim Ministry

**Southwestern Washington Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

Revised 8-09

Interim Ministry in the Southwestern Washington Synod

"Now that Pastor Smith is no longer with us, what will we do to keep our congregation going?"

The answer to such a question may be found in the person of an "Interim Pastor".

"An Interim Pastor is an ordained clergy who is called to serve Christian community with special needs, unique concerns, for a defined interval."

(A Manual for Interim Pastors, Easter 1985)

What is Interim Ministry?

Interim Pastoral Ministry is a time between, a time to reflect on where we have been; a time to discover some things about ourselves; a time to renew and refresh ourselves; a time to map new journeys, devise new challenges, dream new dreams; a time to reclaim who we are and whose we are.

What does an Interim Minister do?

An interim pastor is one who, in the absence of permanent pastoral leadership in a congregation, comes as a specialist sent by the Synod to:

- preach the Word of God to situations of change,
- teach the faith in ways to help us start again in our common ministries with new enthusiasm,
- guide us with counsel and encouragement through difficult decisions,
- bring insight and experience for renewal of ministry.
- faithfully celebrate the Sacraments

Interim pastors live "in the field," sustaining the life of the congregation wherever needed, doing specialized ministry directed at healing, examination, conflict-solving, direction-setting, and the coming of the new pastor. They may be in a parish for six months or more, depending upon the need relative to the health and vitality of the congregation. Some are full time, ordained pastors who do interim ministry as intentional specialized ministry. They are sojourners, just passing through, using their special skills for the specific concerns of the congregation.

Why is the Interim time important?

- It allows a congregation to re-discover its own identity and purpose aside from its permanent pastoral leadership;
- It gives a congregation time to resolve matters and problems it hasn't had the time or occasion to address;
- The interim assists the congregation with special skills many pastors are unable to develop in long-term ministry;
- It gives a congregation breathing space so it can become more deliberate in the selection of its next pastor;
- And it allows the congregation to study its past and present situations so that it can confidently develop ministries for its future.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has responded to congregations that need intentional interim ministry by creating a procedure for receiving interim pastors. The Synod Office can provide information that will assist you in your interim pastoral needs.

When the congregation calls its permanent pastor the interim pastor will leave, to serve another congregation in need. Interim pastors are not available for a call to the congregation in which they have just completed interim ministry, nor are they directly involved in the call process for a permanent pastor. The congregation may wish to honor the interim pastor before he or she leaves in recognition that the interim pastor's work there and the connection with the ministry of the congregation is concluded.

GUIDELINES FOR INTERIM PASTORAL MINISTRY

Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America periodically experience transitions in pastoral leadership. Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America provide for the care of congregations during a time of pastoral vacancy through the appointment by the bishop of the synod of an ordained minister to provide pastoral care on an interim basis. An interim pastor is appointed by the synod bishop with the consent of the congregation or the Congregational Council (C.9.06). Pastoral care is then provided on a contract basis, either through appointment or a term letter of call. The following policy statement describes the guidelines by which interim ministry is provided to congregations.

Congregations in Transition

Because of the importance of the ministry of Word and Sacrament, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America seeks to insure appropriate pastoral leadership for congregations during a time of pastoral vacancy. Interim ministry is provided by synods during the time of transition following the completion of service by the congregation's former pastor and prior to the calling of a new pastor. This is also provided for in a congregation served by a multi-pastoral staff when a senior pastor leaves, or when an associate pastor or other pastoral staff leaves. The interim period is thus a time in which the synod provides pastoral care for a congregation as they move through a process of self-study and change toward new pastoral leadership. A congregation facing the normal range of congregational concerns related to pastoral transition may be served by an interim pastor without formal training. The synod bishop arranges for the congregation to receive Word and Sacrament leadership during the period prior to the regular calling of a pastor through the appointment of an interim pastor. An appointed interim pastor assumes the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to an 'interim supply pastor' with the consent of the synod bishop (S.14.17). The interim pastor normally serves the congregation in a contracted and compensated arrangement. A congregation in a situation of significant concerns and stress related to a pastoral transition may benefit from the leadership of an experienced and trained interim pastor. Situations in which this is particularly appropriate include the transition following a long pastorate, a congregation facing new mission opportunities and/or a changed context for ministry, a transition following the resignation of a pastor related to disciplinary action by the synod, or a transition marked by significant discord or upheaval within a congregation.

Appointed or Called Interim Ministry

An interim pastor may either be appointed by the synod bishop or may serve under a term call extended by the Synod Council (7.41.1 1.b.) Calls to interim ministry may not be extended by a congregation. A pastor serving either under appointment by the bishop or under a term Letter of Call normally serves the congregation in a contracted and compensated arrangement. Unless previously agreed to by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served during this time of transition and shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. C9.97.).

Guideline for Called Interim Pastoral Ministry

1. A called interim pastor shall provide a minimum of a half-time ministry (at least twenty hours per week) to the congregation with commensurate compensation in accordance

with synod guidelines, and consistent with the ELCA guidelines for shared-time calls. A call to interim ministry shall be primarily for the benefit of the congregation served, not for the status of the ordained minister. Such a call may either be a term call to a specific congregation, or a term call to interim ministry in the synod. The determination of this will be with the concurrence of the congregation being served.

2. Prior to being eligible for a call to interim ministry, the pastor shall normally receive appropriate training for interim ministry. The Division for Ministry will review interim ministry training programs and serve as consultant to synods in evaluating such programs.
3. Only pastors who have served in a regular called congregational ministry for a minimum of three years are eligible to serve in a called interim ministry.
4. The interim ministry agreement between the congregation and the called interim pastor will specify compensation, benefits, and the specific goals and expectations related to the period of interim ministry. The Letter of Call issued by the Synod Council may include salary and benefit matters. Normally, however, matters of compensation and benefits are stipulated in the interim ministry agreement with the congregation.
5. In issuing a call to interim ministry, the synod assumes no responsibility for guaranteeing continuous employment, compensation, or benefits for the pastor under call (7.43). It is understood that compensation and benefits are normally provided entirely by the congregation or ministry setting being served. Where possible, continuity of Board of Pensions health benefits will be advocated by the synod. It is explicitly understood that the synod is the calling agent and not the employer of record at any time during the service of an interim pastor under call from the Synod Council.
6. Call to interim service within a synod may be issued for a one to three-year term of service, with an annual review by the Synod Council or its designated committee. However, if a pastor under a term call to interim ministry has not served in a congregation during the preceding twelve months, the call may be terminated by the Synod Council. A term letter of Call issued by the Synod Council may also be coterminous with the duration of service within the congregation served (7y.43). The term call may be terminated by action of the Synod Council. A pastor may resign a call to interim ministry at any time.
7. Initial issuance of a call to interim ministry by the Synod Council shall be upon the recommendation of the bishop. The initial interim ministry agreement with a congregation may be reviewed by the bishop or synod staff prior to the acceptance of the contractual arrangement by the interim pastor.

Guidelines of Appointed Interim Ministry

1. An appointed interim pastor is authorized to provide Word and sacrament ministry to a congregation by the synod bishop with the concurrence of the Congregational Council. The interim pastor assumes the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor. The appointed interim pastor may delegate the same in part to an interim supply pastor with the consent of the synod bishop. (S 14.17.).
2. A retired pastor or pastor on leave from call who serves an interim ministry is recommended by the bishop and signs an interim ministry agreement with the congregation which provides for the compensation, benefits, and the specific goals and expectations related to the period of interim ministry.
3. Normally, only pastors who have previously served in a regular called congregational ministry for a minimum of three years will be eligible to serve in an appointed interim ministry.

INTERIM MINISTRY AGREEMENT (pg 1)

Date:

Congregation:

Pastor:

This agreement is for the Intentional Interim Ministry of the Reverend _____ to be served at _____ Church in _____, Washington, and is agreed to by the Church Council of _____ Lutheran Church, the Reverend _____, and the Office of the Bishop of the Southwestern Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We enter into this agreement so that this congregation may continue to receive pastoral care and leadership during the time between regularly called Pastors.

Since this is an Intentional Interim Ministry, the local Church Council together with the Bishop's Office shall assist the Interim Pastor in determining priorities for this ministry. He/she 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 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, in working through conflict, in dealing with financial problems, or other congregational agendas which need to be worked through so that the congregation is better equipped to carry out its mission and ministry with its new pastor and/or staff.

The Interim Pastor shall provide an ongoing Gospel ministry of Word and Sacrament according to the teaching and practices of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. To this end he/she shall have all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of a regularly called pastor of this congregation. Her/his responsibilities shall include the general pastoral duties of the congregation such as leading worship, visiting the sick and shut-in, baptisms, funerals, weddings, etc. The Interim Pastor shall be responsible to the Office of the Bishop and to the Church Council, both of whom may provide guidance in this ministry. To this end all regular meetings of the Church Council shall provide opportunities for review of the Interim Ministry of the congregation and the Interim Pastor.

The Interim Pastor is encouraged to participate in the local clergy support network and shall participate in the Synod 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.

COMPENSATION (pg 2)

The compensation for the services of the Interim Pastor take into account the needs and financial capabilities of our congregation, the needs and abilities of the Interim Pastor and the guidance of the Synod Office from the perspective of the ELCA at large. The Compensation Package of the previous Pastor or the Synod guidelines for a person with the training and experience of the Interim Pastor may be guides for the congregation. Of primary consideration should be the needs of the congregation, the needs of the Interim Pastor and a fair reimbursement for services.

We agree to the following: (figures provided by the current SWWA Clergy Compensation Guidelines. ELCA benefit amounts may change annually. Check with ELCA Board of Pensions to verify rates.)

- \$ _____ per month equivalent to an annual salary and housing allowance of \$ _____
- \$ _____ annual amount Social Security Offset
- \$ _____ annual amount to ELCA Medical/Dental Plan
- \$ _____ annual pension to ELCA Pension Plan
- \$ _____ annual ELCA Disability, Survivor Benefits and Administration Automobile reimbursement per IRS allowable amount upon submitted receipts payable per month.
- \$700 per year and 1 day per month up to 2 weeks per year for Continuing Education.
- Vacation time shall be computed at the rate of 1 week for every quarter up to 4 weeks per year including Sundays and shall be pro-rated according to length of employment
- Up to two months of continued salary, housing and contributions to the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program in a 12-month period in the event that the pastor is physically and mentally disabled;
- Where applicable, parental leave up to six weeks with full salary, housing, and benefits.
- Provide for up to one month of transitional time for the interim pastor with full salary and benefits at the conclusion of the contractual period of service for the purpose of reviewing the concluding assignment and preparing for a new opportunity to serve.
- If the congregation seeks to revoke this contract before this term is concluded, then Pastor _____ will be entitled to (2) two weeks of severance pay.
- The compensation package is based on _____ FTE.

The Interim Pastor shall be compensated for any unused vacation and education leave upon completion of appointment. The congregation may want to set aside funds for vacation and education time as the interim proceeds so that funds are available upon completion. Unique to the interim pastor is the possibility of working in more than one congregation in a year and changing congregations frequently. Therefore vacation and education leave builds up from several sources of service.

At the beginning of the new fiscal year, the financial terms of this agreement shall be revised, at a minimum, according to the Synod guidelines on cost of living adjustment.

An addendum may be added to this agreement giving specific direction to the focus of the interim time and special agreements appropriate to the needs of the Congregation, the Interim Pastor, and the Synod Office. Addendum attached _____ Yes _____ No

This agreement is effective beginning _____. This agreement shall be terminated according to Synod guidelines and when a regularly called pastor assumes office or upon thirty-days notice with the approval of any two parties involved.

SIGNATURES

Congregational President
Date _____

Interim Pastor
Date _____

Bishop of the Synod
Date _____

ADDENDUM TO THE INTENTIONAL INTERIM MINISTRY AGREEMENT (pg3)

For Pastor _____

Initials:

_____ Congregation President Date _____

_____ Interim Pastor Date _____

_____ Bishop of the Synod Date _____

INTERIM PASTOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT

From _____ To _____

Pastor _____

Congregation _____

1. *What are the major issues confronting the congregation? How is the congregation dealing with these issues?*

2. What new issues have surfaced 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 contracted ____

be extended ____

be terminated early ____?

Why?

EVALUATION OF THE INTERIM PASTOR

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

Congregation _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Interim Pastor _____

Length of time serving your congregation months / years

1. A. Under the agreement which was 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. What do you consider to be the strengths for ministry of this interim pastor?

Preaching Teaching Administration Counseling Problem Solving
 Visitation Handling Conflict Other

Comment on your choices _____

3. Were there any needed services that you feel were neglected during the interim pastor's term?

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

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

LITANY OF WELCOME

Leader: 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 right 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 discharge your duties in harmony with the constitutions of the church?

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

Leader: Will you love, serve, and pray for these people of God, nourishing them with the Word and Holy Sacraments and lead them forward during this important time of change?

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

Leader: 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 and in this community?

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

Leader: 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.

Congregation: AMEN.

Leader: I ask all of you, now, 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.

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

Congregation: WE WILL.

Leader: 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.

LITANY OF FAREWELL

Leader: 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 right 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 to me over these last _____ months. I ask your understanding and forgiveness for mistakes I have made and for expectations unmet. I am grateful that my leadership has been accepted. With joy I recall the many things we have been able to accomplish together and with sadness the many things we were not able to accomplish together.

Congregation: WE RECEIVE YOUR THANKFULNESS, AND WE OFFER OUR FORGIVENESS FOR ANY FAILURES, AND OUR THANKS FOR ALL ACCOMPLISHMENTS. WE ACCEPT THAT YOU NOW LEAVE US TO MINISTER ELSEWHERE. WE EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE FOR YOUR TIME AMONG US AND ASK YOUR FORGIVENESS FOR OUR SHORTCOMINGS AND SOMETIMES FLAGGING FAITH. YOUR INFLUENCE ON OUR LIVES WILL NOT LEAVE US EVEN THOUGH YOU DEPART FROM US.

Pastor: I forgive you your failures and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God and to the Christ we are called to serve.

Leader: 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.

Leader: Do you offer your encouragement for Pastor _____'s continuing ministry?

Congregation: WE DO, WITH THE HELP OF GOD.

Leader: Do you, Pastor _____ release _____ Church from turning to you and depending upon you?

Pastor: I do with the help of God.

Leader: Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here at _____ Church?

Pastor: I do with the help of God.

Leader: 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 OUR 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.

Leader: 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

INTERIM PASTOR EXIT REPORT

Interim Pastor _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Congregation Served _____

Address _____

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 synod staff have provided additional support during the transition period?

Additional comments:

Are you willing to serve again as an interim pastor? [] Yes [] No

If yes, when?

Date _____ Signed _____