

Chapter 2: Seeking Temporary Pastoral Leadership

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Denver Presbytery Interim Ministry Selection Process – A Summary

Following the announcement of a pastor's decision to leave, the COM liaison will coordinate the following:

1. Session and COM liaison meet to discuss leadership options (See Journey Between Pastors, Chapter 2 "Seeking Temporary Pastoral Leadership."). Note, this process assumes that an interim is the best course of action for most congregations. Any exceptions to the interim process must be reviewed and approved by COM.

Liaison explains to Session that the following copies of COM policies are available on the Presbytery website and may be helpful during the interim search process:

- Interim Pastor Training
- Interim Pastor Progress Interview
- Sample Questions for an Interim Candidate

Liaison explains need for developing a job description that includes the five tasks required of an interim trained pastor (as described in the policy on interim pastor progress interviews).

Liaison explains that COM policies "Sample Covenant for Interim Pastor" and "Compensation Policies and Guidelines for Pastors" provide guidance on developing terms of call for the interim pastor. Furthermore the Sexual Misconduct Policy will be reviewed and signed by the selected candidate.

2. Session appoints a search committee (Elders and other members) to identify and select an interim pastor
3. The search committee prepares a church profile and a job description for Session and COM approval. COM approves the draft job description. If the search is local, the position may be posted on the Presbytery website and distributed by the liaison to selected pastors recommended by COM and Presbytery staff. If a national search is contemplated, then a full Ministry Information Form (MIF) is required and will be posted after approval by COM on the Church Leadership Connection website.
4. The search committee interviews candidates. Initial interviews may be conducted by telephone/Skype or, for local candidates, in person meetings. Prior to conducting a second round of interviews with "finalists," COM liaison coordinates with the search committee and the Stated Clerk information needed to conduct background checks and reference checks of the preferred candidate(s). The background check of the selected candidate must be completed before the search committee recommends the candidate to Session.

5. COM liaison schedules neutral pulpit, if desired, to provide search committee an opportunity to listen to the candidate before finalization of an offer. Likewise, the liaison arranges for an interview of the candidate by COM to determine “fit” for the position. Session informs COM liaison of the intent to hire a specific interim pastor. A Session may begin initial discussions on terms of call with the final candidate, but no formal offers can be made to the candidate without COM approval.
6. Session provides COM liaison final version of the job description (as reviewed by the proposed candidate) and Terms of Call (also reviewed by the proposed candidate) for the interim pastor. Proposed compensation must meet current Presbytery minimums (or prorated if applicable). It is important that the candidate not be promised benefits or compensation until both the Session and the interim’s desires are defined and approved by COM. Selected candidate also reviews and completes the Sexual Misconduct Policy requirements, if not previously completed.
7. COM Team and full COM approves final job description and final TOC.
8. Session hires interim pastor normally for one year. May be extended if needed and if approved by COM.

If candidate accepts, the selection process is complete. If not, return to step 4.
9. Approximately six months after hiring, COM liaison meets with Session to discuss and conduct six month checkup. See “Interim Pastor Progress Interview.”
10. During the interim’s pastor’s tenure, the COM follows up periodically with the ministry to provide support or resources as needed.
11. When interim pastor and COM Team agrees the five interim tasks are largely complete, the interim pastor recommends formation of Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) as described in the Journey Between Pastors. See specifically Chapter 3 “Congregational Preparation;” Chapter 4 “Pastoral Search;” and Chapter 5 “Candidacy.”

CRITERIA FOR SEEKING INTERIM PASTORS

Personal qualities preferred:

1. Commitment to Jesus Christ and the ministry of the church
2. Sense of humor
3. Caring
4. Common sense
5. Positive attitude toward growth
6. Willingness to do the work; open; accessible
7. Adaptability
8. Health and stability, emotional stability
9. Self-assured

Professional qualifications necessary:

1. At least level one of interim ministry training
2. Understanding of and ability to facilitate church's work on interim developmental tasks of the church. (See Developmental Tasks for the Church)
3. Comfort with interim situation versus long-term job security
4. "Charismatic" leader and motivator
5. Self-starter in work
6. Flexible pulpit style
7. Ability to diagnose organizations and build strategy for goal setting
8. Training and experience in group process, including healing of grief and conflict
9. Knowledge of denominational programs and linkages
10. Experience in community and culture which would be served, inner city, suburbs, mountains, plains, small church, etc.

Areas where qualifications and skills need to "fit" the church:

1. Theology
2. Goals and skills – as defined or required:
3. etc

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS FOR THE CHURCH

(from The Interim Pastor's Manual, by Alan Gripe and Critical Moment in Ministry, Loren Mead)

1. **Coming to terms with history** - People live with both the pride and the pain of the past. Every congregation has its history and its traditions which are a part of its identity and its "treasure." A congregation's history can be and often is a reservoir of energy or fuel for its future. A congregation's history may be debilitating, erecting roadblocks to change. A part of coming to terms with history is acknowledging that things are not and will not be what they were. Congregations celebrate their history, confess their history, learn from it, profit from it, and move on from it. The one thing congregations cannot do is re-live their history!
2. **Developing a new identity** - Congregations have a way of getting a "fix" on who they are, what they ought to be doing, and staying with that "fix" until something comes along to cause them to rethink that self-image. The interim period provides a fruitful time to ask the deep questions about "who we are now," "where we are now," and "what ought we to be doing now and in the future?"
3. **Power shifts and emerging new leadership** - The interim period provides opportunity to broaden the leadership pool, to allow some leaders to "take a break" while encouraging others to take the helm. The congregation can be helped to see that this is normal and even desirable. It addresses the oft-heard complaint: "A few faithful folks do all the work around here."
4. **Rethinking denominational linkages** - The interim period is a time when the church can examine its relationship to the denomination without the influence of the former pastor and discover the rich resources available through the Presbytery. The interim time affords opportunities to rebuild trust between church and higher governing bodies, helping the church feel itself to be a part of presbytery.
5. **Commitment to new directions and new leadership** - The interim task is seen as helping the congregation come to the service of installation, not as installing a person into a job, but installing a new sense of mission into a community of believing people with reinvigorated leadership from laity and from the new pastor."

PARTICULAR TASKS FOR THE INTERIM

(from “*What Is An Interim Pastorate?*” by William B. Thornton)

1. Making sure everyone who wants to be heard is heard.
2. Encouraging the congregation to think seriously about the kind of ministry needed.
3. Helping them describe their church and its ministry to prospective pastors.
4. Exploring what they reasonably can expect from a pastor.
5. Providing adequate ministerial services so that a congregation doesn't have to rush to get a pastor.
6. Defining and "getting a handle on" any particular problems that an individual congregation may have.
7. Helping a congregation discover its opportunities and alternatives for ministry.

Note: Though not included in this list, a principle challenge, which interims say is always present, is the healing of grief and resolution of conflict.

WHAT A SKILLED INTERIM MINISTER CAN DO FOR A CHURCH

1. Maintain the momentum of ongoing programs of the church. (Many Presbyterians have limited vision of the interim ministry beyond this obvious responsibility. A good interim will carry out other activities in this list that are applicable to or particularly needed by the congregation.) The employment agreement (contract) should allow time for such activities.
2. Heal the grief of the congregation. At the end of almost every pastorate, and surely at the end of a long successful pastorate, feelings of loss and hurt, commonly termed "grief", are experienced, in varying degrees, by membership of the congregation.
3. Relieve anger and conflict, if these are present in the congregation. This is accomplished by various techniques of counseling and conflict resolution, including 4, below.
4. Guide the congregation in studying and analyzing its past, coming to terms with its past in celebration and or contrition, and putting its past behind.
5. Help the congregation realize and discover where it really is now and where it should aim to go.
6. Identify the centers of influence and the decision-making processes of the particular church and strive, as needed, to further both open communication between staff, boards and groups, and a structure for conscious, efficient decision making.
7. Involve new lay people in leadership without creating disunity.
8. Ease acceptance of the succeeding permanent (installed) pastors' style of ministry, which will probably differ in many ways from that of the departed pastor, by demonstrating, in his/her interim ministry, a different but effective style. (It is commonly best, with this in mind, if an interim is not a near-"clone" of the immediate past pastor.)
9. Assist staff and session in identifying any needed changes in structures, staff, activities, or conditions that should not be left to burden the new installed pastor.
10. Strengthen ties between the church and presbytery.
11. Foster an atmosphere of realistic anticipation and enthusiasm for the coming of the new pastor and the future of the church.
12. Assist the Session and Congregation to prepare intentionally for the coming of the new pastor.

WHY AN INTERIM MINISTER SHOULD BE WELL PAID

Sessions commonly view the period of an interim ministry as an opportunity to reduce the pastor's salary for a year or more, after which they will raise it again for a new permanent (installed) pastor. The COM liaison should be able to explain why this notion is unrealistic, unfair, and usually unwise. Denver Presbytery has established specific minimums and has a Compensation Policy and Guidelines that is found on the Presbytery website that should be used when developing the Terms of Call for the Interim. As described in the Definition of Roles for Pastor Search/Call Process in the Preface of JBP the COM liaison and Committee on Ministry will assist in developing and approving terms for call (TOC).

An interim-ministry specialist fully earns a good salary. The interim pastorate calls for many skills - to be frank, it often requires skills beyond those essential to the usual, installed pastorate. The interim ministry is emotionally draining. The stresses of moving, of arranging for new housing, and of emotionally bonding and unbonding with new congregations and new communities must be borne by both the minister and the minister's family.

With regard to the financial burden of interim ministry, one pastor made this statement: "There are costs which an interim must carry which are not part of an installed pastorate. Moving expenses may include a new auto license, title transfer, and changes of insurance on house and car. There may be utilities deposits and installation costs, security deposits, and costs of "buying out" a lease. Furnishings never fit exactly, so there are things to buy for each new home. We have the annual cost of relocation, including telephone, stationery, postage and interview expenses. We may have months between contracts but ongoing expenses. Because interim ministry has inherent stress (largely due to moving), we must maintain a self-care program, putting needed funds into vacations, recreation, and contacts with friends and family. It costs us a lot more to be an interim than it does to be an installed pastor!"

It seems appropriate that the standards a session uses in setting an interim's salary should be the salary paid the departed pastor and the salary to be offered to the next installed pastor. A session that offers less will often find that the people it hopes to attract - skilled interim pastors with good records - have no interest. A successful interim pastorate is vital to the success of the installed pastorate that follows.

The church should deal with this in the context of all pastoral and programmatic staff salaries. Continuing staff may be assuming additional responsibilities with the changes in staff. As many have said, nothing is more expensive to a church, in terms of both emotions and dollars, than an unhappy pastorate of any type.

SAMPLE CHURCH PROFILE – if desired (Local Search only)

The “Job Posting” page on the Presbytery of Denver Website <http://denpres.org/job-postings/> may also be used to advertise the vacancy.

_____ (Church name) Date: _____

PIN: _____ Address: _____

Date Church was Organized: _____ Telephone: _____

Position: _____

_____ Presbyterian Church is a congregation bearing witness to the Reformed faith and serving the spiritual and mission needs of persons in an area not previously containing a Presbyterian witness. A regional church serving the communities of _____, _____ and _____, our church is strategically located at the center of three communities and between the _____ Lake on the east and the _____ Highway on the west (or similar geographical information, if necessary).

Organized in _____ (date) _____, with the dedication of the Christian Education building (Phase I of a proposed three-phase construction program). The current Sanctuary, Phase II, with a seating capacity of _____ people, was dedicated in _____ (date) _____. The Christian Education building consists of a fellowship hall, narthex, kitchen, eight classrooms, two nurseries, first and second floor restrooms, library, secretarial and pastoral offices. The Sanctuary is equipped with an organ, piano, sound system and instruments for the hearing impaired. There is a choir. The pastor's office is behind the chancel area. Both the Sanctuary and the Christian Education buildings are accessible to the handicapped (a brief description of the facility is suggested).

The church currently employs a part-time janitor, part-time secretary, nursery attendant, choir director and accompanist (a description of staffing is recommended).

The church has witnessed a growth from 112 communicant members in 1985 to 158 in 1989. Our average Sunday worship attendance was 74 in 1985 and 106 in 1989. There are 60 enrolled in the Church School with a current average attendance of 42. The majority of our members is in the 30-40 year age group, with the following distribution: families with children - 56%; families without children at home - 19%; singles - 25% (provide a sample statistical breakdown of the congregation).

The church has a 12-member Session with four members elected each year for a three-year period. The Session oversees the following committees: Budget/Personnel, Christian Education, Commitment, Evangelism, Fellowship, Fund-Raising, Mission, Nominating,

Stewardship, and Worship. One member serves as a Presbytery Commissioner and three Elders also serve as Trustees. The Church has a Chancel Choir, Children's Choir, Junior Youth Group (Grades 4-6), a Senior Youth Group (Grades 7-12) and a Mariners Group. The budget for 2015 is (for example) \$144,436.00 (provide an overview of organization).

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION

The Committee on Ministry requires that a job description for an interim pastor be reviewed and approved by the COM Liaison Team before offering the position to a candidate.

_____ Presbyterian Church is seeking an Interim Pastor to serve full time while the congregation searches for a full-time pastor. The Interim Pastor is invited by the Session to preach the Word, administer the sacraments and fulfill pastoral duties as required. This would include drafting and coordinating the printing of the Sunday and Special Worship service bulletins, responding to emergency pastoral care as needed and serving as moderator of both scheduled and called Session meetings. Routine hospitalization and congregational care will be provided by the Session and/or members of the Commitment Committee.

The Interim Pastor shall be available for initial family and individual counseling needs and possess adequate knowledge of appropriate community referral resources available. The Interim Pastor will monitor the counseling process.

Incoming inquiries and church correspondence will be reviewed by the Interim Pastor and appropriate action taken. Session members will be contacted as needed to assist in the coordinating of responses. The Interim Pastor will also provide guidance and advice on church issues. The Interim will assist the church as it works on the interim tasks of:

- 1) Coming to terms with history
- 2) Discovering a new congregational identity
- 3) Facilitating shifts in lay leadership and changes in congregational power structures
- 4) Rethinking and renewing denominational linkages
- 5) Preparing for a new pastoral leadership and a new future

Terms of compensation and work schedule will be finalized during negotiations. Terms of Call must be approved by the Committee on Ministry through the COM liaison, preferably well before the final offer is made to the candidate.

INTERVIEWING FINAL CANDIDATES FOR INTERIM MINISTRY

DECIDING WHO TO INTERVIEW

The Interim Search Committee will consider persons who are available and possibly interested in providing interim pastoral services. In deciding who to interview, consider doing the following:

- Send a copy of your Interim Search documents, such as the Church profile and the job description to each candidate
- Follow up with a telephone conversation to confirm continued interest
- Contact 1-2 of the references listed for each candidate
- Contact the COM liaison for comments on each candidate (and as needed a reference check from another presbytery)
- Request sermon tapes/videos from each person.

HEARING A CANDIDATE PREACH IN A NEUTRAL PULPIT

In proceeding with an interview, you may or may not want to arrange to hear the candidate preach in a "neutral pulpit." A "Neutral pulpit" is a church in Denver Presbytery whose pastor and session are willing to have the candidate preach on an agreeable Sunday. When possible, it is helpful if the neutral pulpit is of comparable size with a similar worship style as the searching congregation. Churches which have no pastor are not usually appropriate places for candidates to preach. COM Representative will arrange neutral pulpits, once given scheduling information.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Be sure to have an understanding with the candidates regarding the payment of the candidates' expenses in attending the interview. As soon as you invite a candidate to an interview, please inform the COM Representative. The COM Representative will contact the candidate to express the COM's interest in both the church and the candidate and to offer consultation during the candidate's visit.

PLANNING QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW

See "Sample Questions for Interim Pastor Candidates on the Presbytery website at <http://denpres.org/com-policies>

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Keep the conversation informal and friendly. Try to work your questions into the natural flow of the conversation, but before closing, make sure that all-important questions have been covered. Go over the job description line by line. Ask what the candidate would like to add or delete. Be very sure that the candidate and the committee arrive at a common vision of what the candidate will expect to accomplish as interim pastor. Include the interim's responsibilities and his/her relations with staff. Remember that the interview is two-way. The candidate is evaluating you and should be encouraged to ask questions.

Conclude with an understanding regarding when you will next communicate.

SAMPLE INTERIM CONTRACT

See "Sample Covenant for Interim Pastor" on the Denver Presbytery website at <http://denpres.org/com-policies>

A SERVICE OF COMMISSIONING OF TEMPORARY LEADERSHIP

SAMPLE

The following litany may be used as part of an initial worship service.

PRESBYTERY REPRESENTATIVE:

We are at a time of beginning. We see with joy the possibilities and potential of the future we will share with your Interim Pastor (Stated Supply,...). There is anticipation, expectation and hope that what we build together with God and with one another will be good and faithful, and full of promise and joy.

CONGREGATION:

We do not yet know what the future holds. Nevertheless, we commit ourselves to God with confidence that God will be with us, sure that God will provide us with all that is necessary. We trust God to lead us toward greater wholeness and greater faithfulness.

ELDER:

Yet we are aware that this time of beginnings is also a time of endings. There are old relationships to which we have not yet said farewell. There are old hurts and old hopes and old ways of being and doing that are powerful among us, and important to us. We do not come to this time as brand-new people. We come with the past which is a part of our life as individuals and as a congregation.

PASTOR:

With God's help, I make this covenant with you: Knowing that I cannot be a candidate to be your next pastor, I pledge to you that I will be a partner in ministry with you, participating in the life of this congregation, implementing the decisions which will be made, working with you in our common tasks, and assisting you in this time of transition. I pledge to you that I will be a leader among you, offering my vision for this part of Christ's Church, listening to your vision, and working with you as we shape and develop our vision. I pledge to you that I will be a pastor for you, standing with you in times of joy or trouble.

CONGREGATION:

With God's help, we make this covenant with you: We pledge to accept and support you as our Interim Pastor (Stated Supply Pastor,...), to challenge you when necessary, and to encourage you as we share together in the life and work of this congregation. We welcome you as you begin your work in our midst as pastor.

PRESBYTERY REPRESENTATIVE:

We are aware that this is a temporary relationship. But we also know that this will be an important time for your congregation. You have covenanted with one another and before God to be faithful to your calling as Christian people.

CONGREGATION AND PASTOR:

As we seek to respond to God's calling, we promise to deal with one another with love, respect, honesty, humor, and creativity. We promise to remember the precious value of real laughter and genuine tears, of sweat earned in honest labor and of the hard work of asking difficult questions. Above all, we covenant together by God's grace to live as God's people, faithful, free, joyful, just, and loving. Amen.

PRESBYTERY REPRESENTATIVE:

May God bless this beginning, and bring us through this time of transition, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, the head of the Church. Amen.

Periodic Reviews of Interim Pastor by COM (Committee on Ministry)

The COM will, approximately six months after the interim is hired, arrange for interview with representatives of the COM. The purpose of the interview is to gauge progress on the five tasks and seek feedback from the interim on issues or resources that the interim may have or need to discuss with COM.

A recommended list of these interview questions are found as "Interim Pastor Progress Review" on the Denver Presbytery website at <http://denpres.org/com-policies>

THE INTERIM TIMELINE: WHAT TO EXPECT

Many have asked for clarification about what an “interim time” is at a church. The five tasks described above are important for an interim and congregation to address. The interim time is not a time of marching in place. There are specific things that an interim Pastor needs to do and significant tasks that are important work of the congregation. Although the length of time that an interim may serve is typically twelve months, the time can actually be shorter or longer, as needed. When the interim believes the five tasks and other changes are addressed, the interim will contact the COM and discuss the congregation’s readiness to form a Pastor Nominating Committee. COM approval is required to form a PNC.