



**THE PRESBYTERY OF MINNESOTA VALLEYS
COMMISSION ON LEADERSHIP**

MANUAL AND RESOURCE GUIDE

***SECTION 5*
SEEKING TRANSITIONAL LEADERSHIP**

**COMMISSION ON LEADERSHIP MANUAL
SECTION 5: SEEKING TRANSITIONAL LEADERSHIP**

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**OVERVIEW OF A PROCESS
THAT IS RECOMMENDED FOR USE WITH CHURCHES SEEKING INTERIM or
TRANSITIONAL PASTORAL LEADERSHIP**

The Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys

Adapted from Presbyterian Church (USA) Resources

Words of Introduction

Circumstances When Interim/Transitional Pastors Are Desirable:

1. The pastoral leader or staff member has resigned, retired, or died, is on extended disability leave, or is in some other way incapacitated, and the congregation needs guidance and support.
2. The congregation needs preparation for a new style of ministry, especially after a particularly long pastorate. (When this is the case, the next Minister of the Word and Sacrament/Pastoral Leader is likely to be a short-term leader or interim, whether intentional or unintentional.)
3. The presbytery has removed a pastoral leader and there is conflict within that congregation and hostility toward the presbytery and/or Commission on Leadership.
4. There have been long-standing feuds or an unusual crisis in the congregation's life and healing is needed.
5. The pulpit vacancy coincides with a sudden change in the character of the neighborhood or an unusual mission opportunity.
6. The church is declining or for other reasons needs the special expertise of supplementary staff.
7. The leaders of a congregation or presbytery want to expand the vision of their ministry.
8. There is an installed, contracted, or commissioned pastoral, and that leader and the session wish to test an experimental ministry for a specific task and for a limited time.
9. There is an installed, contracted, or commissioned pastoral leader, and there is a gap in the program of the church that needs attention but does not require additional permanent staff.
10. The continuity of pastoral and administrative leadership and qualitative and quantitative improvements are desired during a pulpit vacancy.

What is an Interim or Transitional Pastor?

From the *Book of Order*, G-2.0504b:

Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation. When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of a Minister of the Word and Sacrament, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place.

Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. A Minister of the Word and Sacrament employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.

What Can an Interim or Transitional Pastor Do for You?

Many sessions decide for an interim or transitional pastor to guide the congregation during the period between called and installed pastors. The most effective interim/transitional pastors have had extensive special training for this unique ministry. Some interim/transitional pastors serve full-time and others serve part-time depending upon the needs of the church.

The character and grace of this transitional period will have an enormous impact on the congregation's future with its next called and installed pastoral leader. This transition is an important period in the life of the congregation. It is not just "in-between time," but a valuable period in- and-of itself.

The purpose of the Interim/Transitional Pastor is to guide the congregation through five major tasks:

1. Come to Terms with History through Conversations and Healing
 - a. Celebrate what God has been doing and is doing in this congregation
 - b. Recognize wounds or scars that need to be healed
 - c. Leave the past and move into the future
2. Discover the Church's Identity
 - a. How do we see ourselves?
 - b. How does the community see us?
 - c. What gives the church its identity?
 - d. What are the unique gifts God has given to this congregation?
3. Empower the Leadership of the Congregation
 - a. Where are the centers of power in the congregation? (Note: Power here is considered in positive terms: Who has been raised up by God to provide leadership for us?)
 - b. What changes in power are taking place? Who is letting go of previous leadership responsibilities? What new persons are beginning to take leadership roles?
 - c. Who needs to be challenged to take additional responsibilities?
4. Affirm the Connection Linkage as a Presbyterian Church
 - a. What are the strengths of our Presbyterian connectional system?
 - b. How are we helped in our mission by the presbytery, synod and/or General Assembly?
 - c. How can we further build on the strengths and assets afforded us by our connectional system?
5. Make New Commitments to the Future and New Leadership
 - a. Do we have any unexamined expectations of the new pastor?
 - b. How will the new pastor be welcomed?
 - c. Saying goodbye to the interim period and moving with enthusiasm into a new future.

The interim/transitional pastor may remain as long as necessary for a healthy transition to occur within the life of the congregation. The interim/transitional pastor is normally not eligible to become the next called and installed pastor.

It is important to remember that:

- An interim or transitional pastor is your pastor, carrying on the ministry of the church with you while you search for an installed pastor.
- An interim or transitional pastor helps you deal with all the feelings that accompany the departure of a pastor - grief, anger, relief, confusion, anxiety.
- An interim or transitional pastor helps you think about your church and its ministry in the past, present and future.
- An interim or transitional pastor can help your church deal with problems before a new minister is called.
- An interim or transitional pastor helps you prepare for a new minister.

Possible Activities during the Interim/Transitional Period

Every congregation is different. A congregation is different at different times. The transitional experience at one time will not be the same at another time. A session and the Interim/Transitional Pastor Search Committee will want to spend some time in thinking through the congregation's particular needs at this specific time. What have some congregations experienced during the interim period?

Below is a "laundry list" to consider. Some items will apply to your congregation's situation, and others may not. Use this list to reflect upon your congregation and its specific needs.

- Maintenance of status quo.
- Leadership in the congregation's re-visioning process.
- Conflict resolution within the congregation.
- Exploration of new programmatic possibilities.
- Reorganization of session and training of officers.
- Guidance about staffing concerns.
- Examination and possible revision of by-laws, procedures, policies, and structural organization to be in line with the church's mission.
- Possible ritual of closure with previous pastor, if not already done.
- Vent emotions, heal hurts, completion of grief work.
- Renew faith; discover strengths.
- Maintain regular contact with the Commission on Leadership and presbytery staff with regular reports.
- Updating of records.
- Implementation of changes already determined by the congregation.
- Practice new ways of communicating and making decisions.
- Reducing level of anxiety and fear of the unknown in the congregation.
- Attention to stewardship and financial matters. How is giving in the congregation? Address issues of endowments, memorial policies. How is financial statement related to the church's mission statement? When was the last audit? What are the procedures for handling money?
- Renewing the spiritual life of the congregation.

Finding an Interim or Transitional Pastor

On the surface, it may look the same as securing a new called and installed pastor (or associate pastor) for your congregation, but it is not. Below, some significant differences are listed.

1. The interim or transitional pastor position is different.
 - The person is not called by a vote of the congregation but hired by the session.
 - Although the presbytery's Commission on Leadership will be closely involved, there is no service of installation conducted by presbytery through an Administrative Commission.
2. The interim/transitional pastor selection process is different.
 - Rather than developing an extended Ministry Information Form (MIF), the session may select a special committee to develop an interim/transitional position description, along with a brief congregational description based on that form. If the Session chooses to work through the Church Leadership Connection's matching system, then a complete MIF should be done.
 - The position description is approved by session and "the way becomes clear" to begin the search.
 - The Presbytery Leader and Commission on Leadership (COL) liaison will provide support for the search committee as appropriate.

The Outcome

Your experience of reading PIFs (Personal Information Forms), listening to candidates preach, and engaging with them during an interview will uncover the right interim pastor for your congregation and situation.

The Steps Toward an Interim/Transitional Pastor

1. If the Session, in consultation with the Commission on Leadership, decides that seeking an Interim or Transitional Pastor is in the best interests of the congregation, the Session will appoint an Interim/Transitional Pastor Search Committee from among its membership.
2. This group prepares an interim pastor position description which includes an outline of pastoral duties and terms of employment. A sample interim pastor position description will be found in the following pages. The session's approval of this material moves the process to the third step in the search.
3. The COL liaison, in consultation with the Commission on Leadership and the Presbytery Leader/Executive Director for Presbytery Mission (EDPM) will work with the Search Committee to publicize the search. As they identify candidates for consideration, those names will be shared with the search team
4. The Search Committee will also review Personal Information Forms (PIF's) and resumes, conduct initial interviews with prospective candidates, and perform reference calls.
5. Before bringing a prospective candidate for a formal interview, the Search Committee will:

- a. Request the EDPM/Presbytery Leader to conduct an “executive check” with the prospect’s presbytery to make sure that the way be clear to proceed with the prospect.
 - b. Request COL to schedule a “clearance/entrance interview” with the prospective candidate. This will take place during the prospect’s trip to visit with the Session.
6. The Search Committee conducts interviews and presents a nominee to session. A sample covenant will be found on pages 511-512.
 7. The session invites, the candidate accepts, and the presbytery’s Commission on Leadership approves. The congregation does not vote on an interim/transitional pastor.
 8. Interim/Transitional Pastors cannot serve for more than one year at a time without getting permission from presbytery’s Commission on Leadership to extend the contract. Some interim/transitional terms are shorter than one year, others are longer.
 9. Interim/Transitional Pastors shall become members of the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys.
 10. Interim/Transitional Pastors will submit quarterly reports to the Commission on Leadership regarding the congregation’s progress in dealing with the transitional tasks.

The Interview Process – Some Suggestions

Getting Ready for the Interview

- Plan your interview time carefully so you use it to good advantage.
- Decide the setting so that all are comfortable.
- Decide who on the committee should begin the time with a brief statement about the congregation and your understanding of the needs during the transitional period.
- Frame your questions in advance and decide who should/will ask each question. (Hint: since any question will be asked with a particular emphasis, try to keep this consistent through the various interviews.)
- Allow adequate opportunity for the candidate to ask questions.

Some Questions You May Wish to Ask

- Tell us about your faith journey.
- What are the things you feel best about in your last ministry? What have been the challenges there?
- What interests you about this position?
- What do you bring to our ministry?
- What are your greatest strengths in ministry? Your greatest weaknesses?
- One of our congregation’s goals is to _____. How would you envision doing that?
- Describe a typical week in your ministry.
- Share your perspective on the Presbyterian Church (USA).
- One of the issues our session has debated in the past few years is _____. Tell us how you might address that topic.
- If we selected you as our interim/transitional pastor, when could you start and what would be your start-up plan?
- How do you balance your personal/family life with your ministry?

- What will you need from us, the members of this church, to be effective as our interim/transitional pastor?
- What questions or concerns do you have?
- You will also want to develop questions related to the specific candidate. These will come out of things you read in the PIF and things you hear from references. Is there anything else you need to know that will impact this person's performance of ministry?

**TRANSITIONAL MINISTRY
THE DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS AND GRIEF AND CELEBRATION**

QUESTIONS FOR INTERIM/TRANSITIONS MINISTRY

Congregational Grief	Developmental Task	Congregational Celebration
<p>Is the congregation living in the past with its pastoral memories?</p> <p>Is the congregation still refusing to vent feelings of grief?</p> <p>Is the congregation unwilling to talk about what was bad?</p>	Coming to Terms with History	<p>Is the congregation celebrating memories but also embracing new joys?</p> <p>Is the congregation willing to talk about its feelings but also ready to move on?</p> <p>Is the congregation willing to celebrate and see the good in their past?</p>
<p>Is the congregation resistant to discuss mission study?</p> <p>Is the congregation only thinking about who they have been?</p> <p>Does the mission and ministry focus on the past pastoral relationship?</p>	Seeking a New Identity	<p>Is the congregation seeking to affirm its mission and plan for its future?</p> <p>Is the congregation asking questions that indicate a season of growth?</p> <p>Is the congregation seeking a vision for today and tomorrow?</p>
<p>Is the congregation still content with honoring only its past leaders?</p> <p>Is the congregation resistant to talking about power and change?</p> <p>Is the congregation denying or caught up in a season of conflict?</p>	Facilitating Shifts in Leadership	<p>Is the congregation welcoming new leadership?</p> <p>Does the congregation have some openness and understanding of power?</p> <p>Is the congregation looking for a smooth transition even with unrest?</p>

**THE DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS AND GRIEF AND CELEBRATION
(CONTINUED)**

QUESTIONS FOR INTERIM MINISTRY

Congregational Grief	Developmental Tasks	Congregational Celebrations
<p>Is the congregation isolated or connected with the PC (USA)?</p> <p>Is the congregation struggling with questions of authority?</p> <p>Is the congregation resistant to crisis intervention?</p>	<p>Renewing Denominational Linkages</p>	<p>Is the congregation looking for greater partnership with the church?</p> <p>Is the congregation exploring the sharing of its resources with others?</p> <p>Is the congregation aware of its denominational history?</p>
<p>Is the congregation struggling to say goodbye and afraid to say hello?</p> <p>Is the congregation outwardly fearful of another farewell?</p> <p>Is the congregation avoiding transition rituals?</p>	<p>Commitment to New Leadership and the Future</p>	<p>Is the congregation open to the new mission that God has for the church?</p> <p>Is the congregation modeling appropriate exiting skills?</p> <p>Is the congregation showing though its transition a readiness for the future?</p>

SAMPLE POSITION DESCRIPTION FOR AN INTERIM OR TRANSITIONAL PASTOR

Position: Interim Pastor/Transitional Pastor

Purpose:

To provide spiritual leadership, pastoral care, administrative oversight, and organizational direction to the church with a broad program of worship, teaching, outreach, and fellowship: emphasis on worship, leadership, preaching, teaching and stewardship.

Accountability:

To the session and the presbytery.

Responsibilities:

1. Be head of staff, leading, directing, and supervising the pastoral, program and support staff.
2. Lead the congregation and its leadership as it works through the “interim tasks”.
3. Preach, lead in worship, administer the sacraments, and provide a teaching ministry which will encourage the spiritual growth of the membership and their outreach to the community in evangelism and mission.
4. Provide active leadership and encouragement to the session, the congregation, and its organizations in articulating vision and developing programs reflective of our calling to be a renewed community in Christ and faithful followers of Christ.
5. Oversee, encourage and support the ministries of the Personnel, Worship and Stewardship Commissions, the Nominating Committee, and their ministry teams as well as other task forces and committees as necessary.
6. Provide leadership and resourcing in the area of organizational development and management of staff.
7. Moderate session.
8. Strengthen and build member faithfulness as Christian stewards.
9. Mentor others spiritually.
10. Share in a ministry of compassion, comfort, and hope in hospital calling, crisis counseling, home visitation, funerals and weddings.
11. Participate in the work and ministry of councils beyond the session, ecumenical groups, and the life of the community as a representative of the congregation.

12. Plan for and participate yearly in educational programs for personal and professional development in consultation with the Personnel Committee.

Relationships:

Relates to the staff as head of staff, the session as moderator, the members as pastor, commissions and committees as ex-officio member and servant leader, and the presbytery as a continuing member.

Evaluation:

Performance review will be conducted annually by the Personnel Commission, who will review the adequacy of compensation annually at a separate time

**THE PRESBYTERY OF MINNESOTA VALLEYS, PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)
A COVENANT BETWEEN A SESSION AND AN INTERIM OR
TRANSITIONAL PASTOR**

The following covenant between the session of _____ Presbyterian Church and _____ is for the purpose of providing interim/transitional pastoral services to the _____ Presbyterian Church of _____.

_____ will be the Interim/Transitional Pastor Interim/Transitional Associate Pastor of the _____ Presbyterian Church from _____ to _____ (not more than 12 months).

The Interim/Transitional Pastor (check the appropriate responses):

- Will become Is a member of the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys
- Will Will not serve as Moderator of the Session.
- Will Will not serve as Head of Staff.

The Position Description for this position is attached to this covenant. The Position Description shall include the Five Tasks of an Interim/Transitional Pastor [Come to Terms with History through Conversation and Healing; Discover the Church's Identity; Empower Leadership of the Congregation; Affirm the Connectional Linkage as a Presbyterian Church; and Make New Commitments to the Future and New Leadership].

Please list key goals for this transitional period:

During the length of the agreement, _____ will be a member of, and accountable to, the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys through quarterly reports to the Commission on Leadership (COL). At the end of the covenant, _____ Presbyterian Church agrees to provide a performance review.

The Rev. _____ affirms support for the doctrinal stance of the PC(USA) as found in the PC(USA) Book of Confessions, the system of government as found in the "Form of Government, worship as described in the "Directory of Worship" discipline as described in the Rules of Discipline and in general the mission and program of the PC(USA).

It is understood that the Rev. _____ has agreed not to be involved in any way with the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC), except that trained interim/transitional pastors, in consultation with COL, may lead the congregation's mission study or other appropriate process. The Interim/Transitional Pastor will see that the PNC makes adequate reports. The Interim/Transitional Pastor will not assist in the preparation of the congregation's Ministry Information Form (MIF).

It is understood that _____ ordinarily will not be a candidate for the vacant pastoral office of _____ Presbyterian Church, and in every way, will seek to prepare the way for the coming of an installed pastor.

This covenant is for a period of up to _____ months (not more than twelve; G-2.0504b) from the date below. This covenant may be terminated by the session upon 30 days' written notice. The Interim/Transitional Pastor may terminate the covenant with 30 days' written notice and a forfeiture of any payment beyond the 30-day period (see NOTE below). This agreement may be extended with the approval of the Commission on Leadership.

Terms:

The Interim/Transitional Pastor is employed on a Full-Time Part-Time basis, serving approximately _____ hours per week, and will be compensated for pastoral services as follows (pro-rated as necessary).

Salary	\$	Housing	\$
Utilities	\$	Social Security Allowance	\$
Professional Expenses	\$	Vacation	Four Weeks
Continuing Education	\$	Study Leave	Two Weeks
Travel Expenses	\$	Other	\$
Other	\$		
Full Pension, Medical, Disability, and Death coverage under the Board of Pensions is required. Entering a specific amount is optional. \$			

NOTE:

All obligations, both of time and money, are to be used prior to the date of termination of the Covenant or forfeited on the date of termination of the Covenant unless previously approved by the Session and Commission on Leadership.

Approved by Action of the Session: Date _____

Signed: Moderator of the Session

Signed: Clerk of the Session

Signed: Interim/Transitional Pastor

Approved by Commission on Leadership: Date: _____

Signed: COL Chair, Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys

Signed: Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys