

## **Three Basic Approaches to the Interim Time**

Today, every faith community is experiencing change and transition. This change and transition may be things like: shifting demographics; decreasing membership, attendance, and finances; a need to restructure staff and/or lay leadership; a no longer vibrant mission/vision; or even the possibility of relocation, merger or closure. This is a difficult and sometimes stressful, and even painful, experience. Add to this list a change of pastors, and the anxiety suddenly increases several fold.

Consequently, the way a congregation chooses to use its interim time will shape congregational growth, identity, and health for years to come. What is done in the interim time really determines whether the new minister, staff and congregation will form a solid ministry team. This interim time is the ideal opportunity for a congregation to clearly answer the questions: “Who are we?” “Who is God calling us to be in the future?”

To openly and candidly address these questions, faith community leaders find that they are best served by outside assistance. Such help can be secured in one of three ways: traditional interim minister, intentional interim minister, or transition facilitator.

Some important factors to keep in mind as your congregation discerns their approach to the interim time are:

1. The interim minister cannot be a candidate for the permanent pastor.
2. These can be full or part-time positions based upon the congregation’s needs and the interim’s availability.
3. Compensation is based upon the package of the last pastor (or the package that will be used for the next pastor) and is adjusted according to the amount of time requested (full or part time).
4. It is highly recommended that the interim and congregation establish a covenant agreement that clearly spells out the expectations of one another.
5. The interim has an accountability group designated in the covenant.

### **Traditional Interim Minister**

The traditional interim minister performs all the responsibilities usually expected of the pastor. The congregation is actively forming a search/call committee, or already is engaged in the search and call process for the next pastor. Most traditional interims are retired clergy, or have other employment.

### **Intentional Interim Minister (IIM)**

The IIM is an experienced minister who has completed over 85 hours of specialized training and fieldwork experience to develop proficiency in this unique ministry. Performing all the usual responsibilities of the pastor, the IIM will help the congregation

establish a Transition Team, will train the team, and then facilitate their leading the congregation through the following five areas (called Focus Points) of a healthy congregation:

Heritage: reviewing how the congregation has been shaped and formed

Mission: defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction

Leadership: reviewing the congregation's ways of organizing and developing new and effective clergy and lay leadership

Connections: discovering all the relationships and networks a faith community builds beyond itself

Future: synthesizing the interim work, activating and training the pastoral search or call committee, and coaching the committee (as requested) to accomplish its work

### **Transition Facilitator (TF)**

This option combines the traditional interim model with a second person serving as a transition facilitator. The TF will help the congregation establish a Transition Team, will train the team, and then facilitate their leading the congregation through five areas of a healthy congregation as described above. The TF is both a certified IIM and trained facilitator. The cost for the TF is based upon a proposal written to fit the specific needs of a congregation.