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**Calling of an Interim Pastor**

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The period in which the congregation is without its pastor is called the "interim period." This refers to the time between the former pastor leaves and the new one comes. Providing someone to preach in each worship service during the interim is referred to as "filling" or "supplying the pulpit." One of the usual duties of the Pastor Search Committee[[1]](#footnote-1) is to provide someone who will preach in the worship services.

When the pastor leaves, at least four attitudes are evident in the congregation:

1) Grief (sadness)

2) Joy (gladness)

3) Anger (madness)

4) Confusion.

One of the primary goals of the interim period is to bring the people with different attitudes back together again.

During the absence of a pastor, everyone wonders who might be preaching in his place. Here are two methods that are used by congregations to “fill the pulpit:”

1. A recognized and experienced minister is asked to preach on a variety of different occasions. This is often referred to as "supplying the pulpit" and the one who preaches is said to be the "pulpit supply."
2. A recognized and experienced pastor is asked to serve as temporary pastor. This does not mean he will become the new pastor. It merely means he will be the primary person preaching in all services of the congregation and serving in ways common to a pastor (sometimes making hospital visits, counseling needs, etc.). This is often referred to as an *interim pastorat*" and the one who serves is said to be the *interim pastor*. His work is completed when the congregation secures its new pastor. The church is well advised to call an interim pastor to help the church move through the transition from pastor to pastor. During a time when the members are anxious about the future of the church, the interim pastor strives to be a “*non-anxious presence”* for the congregation. **It should be understood that when a person agrees to serve as interim pastor, he also agrees not to allow himself to be considered as a candidate for the position of pastor.**

Most churches view the time between the resignation of one pastor and the call of another as unproductive. Some feel it is wasted time. Others fear the congregation will lose members or dollars. Still others are in a rush to call a new pastor as quickly as possible so those things can return to normal.

Significant studies of hundreds of interim congregations over the past twenty years are now showing that the interim between pastors can be an important time in the congregational life. R. Neil Chafin, an experienced consultant to congregations says, “The way a congregation chooses to use its interim time will shape congregational growth, identity, and health for years to come. We also know that what is done in the interim time really determines whether the new minister and congregation will form a solid ministry team.”

Congregations that fail to make wise use of the interim time tend to repeat their history with the new minister. This can lead to pain and confusion for the minister and prevent the congregation from meeting its goals of spiritual growth for its members and ministry to its community.

Expectations of ministers and churches vary enormously. Membership in many churches is either plateaued or declining. Many congregations are unsure of their future. Each generation differs on expectations for the church. The interim is the best time to talk about and clarify these hopes and questions about church life.

A *Transitional Pastor* or *Intentional Interim* can help a congregation work through some discovery processes. Valuable information can be gained during the interim period that can greatly enhance the ability of the church to find the right pastor.

There are several conditions that often indicate the need for an *Intentional Interim/Transitional Pastor* *Ministry*:

The pastor had been there over ten years;

There are undercurrents in the church that have not been settled;

The pastor left because of a moral failure;

The pastor was forced to resign;

There is significant conflict in the church.

The Intentional Interim/Transitional Pastor Ministry process is led by a Transition Team[[2]](#footnote-2) (unless this duty is assigned to another group of members by your Church Constitution) which is a group of trusted church members who are selected by the church and who represent the diversity of the congregation. An Intentional Interim/Transitional Pastor is called to serve as a consultant to the church leaders. The responsibilities/expectations/commitments of the Intentional Interim/Transitional Pastor and the church should be defined in a written covenant that must be approved by the church.

# Job Description Worksheet for Interim Pastor

**Principle Function:** The Interim Pastor is responsible to the Chairman of Deacons and the Chairman of the Personnel Committee[[3]](#footnote-3) and shall provide pastoral and administrative leadership for the church and shall use his skills in proclamation and pastoral care to minister to the needs of persons in the church and community as negotiated in a covenant agreement.

**Responsibilities to be Negotiated between the Interim Pastor and the Church**:

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Prepare for and preach at worship services on Sunday morning and Sunday evening — (3 units\*)

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Prepare for and lead mid-week prayer/Bible study service — (1 unit)

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Administer office responsibilities, including the preparation of bulletins, newsletters, financial reports, etc.) — (3/4 unit)

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Supervise the church staff and other church employees — (2 units)

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Minister to the sick in the hospitals and nursing homes — (1 unit)

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Participate in church outreach and visit prospective members — (1 unit)

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Visit the homebound — (1 unit)

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. Counsel with members in crisis — (1 unit)

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Meet with the Deacons in their regular meetings — (1/2 unit)

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. Meet with other church committees (e.g., church council, trustees, personnel committee, budget/finance committee, and search committee) — (1/2 unit)

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. Conduct training for deacons and committees — (1 unit)

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. Prepare for and conduct funerals and weddings — (1 unit)

\_\_\_\_\_ 13. Prepare for and serve as moderator for church business meetings — (1/4 unit)

\_\_\_\_\_ 14. Attend other church functions (e.g. class socials, anniversaries, prayer breakfasts, denominational meetings, etc.) — (1 unit).

\*Note: 1 unit = 4 hours

**Remuneration**

* Based upon the full-time pastor working 15 units per week (60 hours), the Interim Pastor shall be compensated based upon the following formula:

Pay = (# of units/15) X (Full-time Pastor’s salary and housing)

* In addition, the Interim Pastor will be reimbursed for mileage (See IRS [*Publication 463, Travel, Entertainment, Gift, and Car Expenses*](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p463.pdf)) and other expenses incurred as indicated by receipts.

The Finance Committee, in cooperation with the Personnel Committee, should be responsible for determining the compensation package of the interim pastor.[[4]](#footnote-4) The Search Committee should be prepared to help negotiate between the Finance Committee and the interim-pastoral candidate the specific appropriation compensation.

1. The church organizational structure determines what committee/group/team is responsible for bringing recommendations/making decisions in these matters. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The church organizational structure determines what committee/group/team is responsible for bringing recommendations/making decisions in these matters. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
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