

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
CENTRAL STATES SYNOD**



Rationale for Interim Pastor NOT Becoming a Candidate for Call

A question is often raised by a congregation and/or a call committee in words such as: “Why is it not a good idea for a congregation to consider calling its interim pastor to be the next permanent/settled pastor for our congregation?”

From the experience of those who have served as interim pastors and those who have studied the issues involved in interim ministry, the following reasons provide the answer:

A. Interim ministry is unique. There are specific tasks to accomplish during the interim that work at rebuilding. An interim pastor often leads in ways that are acceptable during an interim period, but may not be as acceptable to some in the congregation were s/he to remain as settled pastor. In fact, interim pastors are appointed for the specific needs of the congregation during transition, and those needs are not necessarily the same when the congregation is ready for a settled pastor.

B. Because the interim pastor has more visibility and has developed relationships in the congregation, an interim pastor has an advantage in access over other possible pastoral candidates who may be more appropriate for the call.

C. An interim pastor will always have a following, but will often have those who are not favorably committed to him or her. If the interim pastor were called, there would be built-in opposition from the beginning.

D. If the decision is made to consider the interim pastor along with other pastoral candidates, and the interim pastor is not recommended for the call, there could easily be hurt feelings that could jeopardize either the remainder of the interim work, or the start-up of the settled pastor.

E. The congregation itself may pass up better leadership for that stage of its life if it fails to consider a larger number of candidates who have gifts to bring.

Therefore, the Covenant for Interim Ministry expressly states that the interim pastor will not make him/herself available for call, and that the congregation agrees not to attempt to call the interim pastor. When the interim pastor is introduced to the congregation, it should be made clear that the work of an interim pastor is distinctly different from that of a settled pastor, and the interim pastor is not available for call in that place. Since members may naturally form an attachment to the interim pastor, it is often necessary for both the pastor and congregational leaders to remind members that issuing a call to the interim pastor is not permitted under the interim ministry covenant.