

Interim Ministry:

*A Partnership between the Congregation, the Synod Office,
and an Interim Pastor in the Time of Transition between Pastors*

In this fast-paced world, we often neglect to take a breath, reflect on the past, celebrate the present, and imagine a new future engaged in God's work. In Scripture, that rich time is often a wilderness time/experience. The interim period between the time when a pastor leaves and a new pastor is called can be such a time in the life of the congregation. The interim period:

- takes an intentional look at the past and how God has guided the mission of the community;
- allows space for celebration of the present as members examine the gifts of the community;
- utilizes intentional conversation and prayer to imagine a new future of mission and ministry;
- works directly with the call process to identify gifts needed in the next pastor so the congregation can be faithful and strong.

An interim period can last nine to eighteen months, depending on the needs of the congregation and the work that needs to be done during the interim. Depending on the needs of the congregation, this interim period may include the need to have an outside consultant work with leadership and a transition team to assist in identifying the purpose and the mission of the congregation. Rushing the process or having the wrong people guide you through the process can be detrimental in seeking to call a new pastor, rather than just attempting to “replace” a former pastor.

Finding an Interim Pastor

- If an interim pastor is needed, the synod office will identify potential interim candidates who may be pastors who have been trained as “intentional” interim pastors, pastors who are retired or on leave from call, or Synod Authorized Minister. Different situations call for different skill sets.
- The council of the congregation interviews the potential interim, discusses needs and expectations, and works out a compensation package. The compensation package can be based upon the synod's compensation guidelines as well as the congregation's current budget.
- Once an agreement has been reached, a *Covenant Agreement for an Interim Ministry* is signed by the president and secretary of the congregation, the interim pastor, and a representative of the synod office.

The following is a provision in the Model Constitution for Congregations of the ELCA and pertains to interim pastors.

***C9.07** *During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Unless previously agreed upon by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served.*