

INTERIM PASTORS

1. The Committee on Ministry of Albany Presbytery recognizes that the services of a trained Interim Pastor in the period between installed pastors may benefit any congregation. An interim pastor provides continuity in the pulpit, in the administration, and in the pastoral care of the church. Therefore, the COM recommends to all Sessions the procuring of services of an Interim Pastor as soon as possible after an installed pastor departs.
2. The COM shall consult with the Session of each church concerning temporary pastoral services required during the transition between installed pastorates. The provision of such services is the responsibility of the Session, and it is expected that the Session and representatives of the COM will discuss the needs of the congregation, any special circumstances, and financial resources of the congregation. COM is responsible for informing the Session of all possible options, and may advise the Session regarding the advantages and disadvantages of a particular option.
3. A church expecting to call a full-time, installed pastor is expected to contract the services of a full-time, trained Interim Pastor.
4. In particular circumstances, including conflicted churches and those whose departing pastors have been long-term (ten years or more), COM may *require* a Session to seek the services of an Interim Pastor. Such an Interim Pastor must have received (or be in the process of receiving) training in a recognized Interim Ministry training program. In such cases, the COM and the General Presbyter will aid in the search for a trained Interim Pastor. The General Presbyter, in particular, has access to the Interim Ministry Network and may be able to find candidates not easily accessible to the Session.
5. In cases in which the COM has *required* a Session to seek the services of a trained Interim Pastor, the COM may advise the Session to seek such services for an extended period of time (longer than one year). In such cases, the COM will consult with the Interim Pastor as well as with the Session, regarding the congregation's readiness to elect a PNC and enter the call process.
6. In cases in which the COM *recommends* that the Session seek the services of an Interim Pastor, the Session may contract the services of a pastor who has not received Interim Ministry training, but that person must, of course, be approved by COM to serve in that capacity.
7. COM recommends that a written position description for the Interim Pastor be negotiated between the Session and the Interim Pastor, in consultation with COM, and that this position description be updated periodically as needed.
8. COM recommends that the starting point for negotiation of compensation of the Interim Pastor be the compensation package of the last installed pastor. Variances in the amount

can be negotiated in consultation with COM, taking into account the needs of the congregation, the experience of the Interim Pastor, and the financial situation of the congregation.

9. COM recommends that Interim Pastor and Session also negotiate terms of a severance agreement, in order to protect the Interim Pastor from undue financial hardship upon the calling of a new installed pastor. COM further recommends, in the case of a congregation for whom such severance compensation would be a hardship, that the Presbytery aid the congregation in providing such severance.
10. In order that COM may be informed during the interim period, semi-annual reports (one written, one in the form of an interview) are required of the Interim Pastor. In addition, the Session will be asked to submit an annual written report evaluating the congregation's progress during the interim period.

Rationale: COM has become increasingly aware of the need for good transitions between installed pastorates. In Interim Ministry training, pastors learn the needed skills for analyzing the power structure and the strengths and weaknesses of a congregation, and for acting as catalyst for the needed change while providing the needed pastoral leadership. Often the interim period without this leadership becomes merely a "holding time" until the next installed pastor arrives. While this may not be a problem in some congregations in some circumstances, in others it can be disastrous. Issues that could have been cleared up during the interim become issues for the next installed pastor. Because COM responsibilities include both transition times and pastoral relationships, this policy would help COM to prevent some unhappy situations from occurring and help resolve others in progress.

Defining situations in which COM may require, rather than recommend, transitional pastoral leadership may make explicit what has been implicit in COM policies. At the same time, the definitions must be somewhat fluid, because each congregation's situation is in some ways unique.

Requiring a full-time Interim Pastor for those churches seeking full-time pastors would underscore the importance of the transition time in the life of the congregation, and also help ensure that at the same time the Interim Pastor is working on the "developmental tasks" with the congregation, other pastoral responsibilities are not neglected.

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