

Great Milwaukee Synod - Interim Manual for Congregations in Transition Interim Ministry

Life is a series of transitions from birth to death. At best, transition, **though painful, can provide individuals and communities with a time of reflection, vision and opportunity to effect creative change.** At worst, transitions can be disruptive and discouraging, leaving individuals and/or communities drained of spirit or hope. In all instances, transitions are made easier if there is a system of nurture and support in place to assist, coach, mentor or advise the individual and/or community through the time of transition.... For communities this support and nurture is more formalized and may be provided by someone who is appointed, elected or hired to assist the community in transition.

When a pastor leaves a congregation...the congregation experiences a loss. This loss, when acknowledged, can best be resolved during the time of transition before a new pastor is called and installed. **An interim pastor...will provide support and nurture when needed during the transition by assisting, coaching, mentoring and/or advising the congregation during its transition period.**

The Purpose of Interim Ministry...

The purpose of Interim Ministry is to provide appropriate and effective pastoral leadership from the time the current pastor leaves and the arrival of a new pastor.

1. The Tasks of Interim Ministry

♦ **Coming to terms with history.** The congregation comes to understand what has happened. For example: congregation may need to deal with feelings of loss, grief, anger or anguish. "Letting go" of the former pastor is a critical dynamic in this developmental task.

♦ **Discovering a new identity.** The interim period provides an opportunity for the congregation to evaluate itself. It is a time to analyze present realities and real possibilities for ministry and mission.

♦ **Managing shifts in lay leadership.** When a pastor leaves a congregation, new patterns of lay involvement often arise. Person who has been actively involved may step back; others may step forward. Thus, the interim period can be a time when development and preparation of lay leadership calls for special attention.

♦ **Committed to a New Leadership and a Future.** During the interim ministry period, a congregation can ready itself spiritually in order to enter into partnership with a new pastoral leader. Renewed commitment to the Gospel is a primary goal in the time of transition.

♦ **Strengthening Denomination Relationships.** The interim period usually brings a congregation into a closer and more frequent contact with the Bishop, the synodical staff, and church wide resources.

2--The Interim Pastor assists the congregation in developing an awareness of its own style and gifts within its membership that will continue and expand the parish's well being.

3--The Interim Pastor with his/her own style of ministry opens up the possibilities for the congregation to accept and welcome other styles of pastoral ministry.

4--The Interim Pastor...is expected to guide... the Mission Exploration Team process and development of the congregational mission site profile. But, not to be a member of the Call Committee.

5--The Interim Pastor carries out the responsibilities as stated in the Covenant For Interim Pastoral Ministry.