



Metropolitan Chicago Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

INTERIM MINISTRY HANDBOOK

“NOT EVERYTHING THAT IS FACED
CAN BE CHANGED.
BUT NOTHING CAN BE CHANGED
UNTIL IT IS FACED.”

-JAMES BALDWIN



INTRODUCTION

Life is full of change and transition. Congregational life includes change and transition as well. Because the nature of professional ministry involves deep relationships and emotions, pastoral transitions can be disruptive of congregational mission and ministry. Pastoral relationships are of a different character than most business/professional relationships, so attention must be paid to intentional transition time between pastoral calls. In such times of transition, interim pastors can help congregations face these challenges.

Before You Begin

The first task for congregations in the transition process is to complete a Congregational Interim Ministry Survey.



<https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Congregational-Interim-Ministry-Survey.pdf>

Once this survey is completed, please submit to your synod staff.



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WHAT IS AN INTERIM PASTOR?

Sometimes called a transitional minister, this handbook assumes that an interim pastor is one who serves after a settled pastor leaves and before a new settled pastor starts.

Typically, interim pastors are one of two types:

1. **Traditional Interim Pastor:** pastor who leads a congregation during the transition between a settled pastor leaving and newly called pastor coming. This interim pastor serves during a time of transition, but these congregations may not need a specially trained interim pastor.
2. **Intentional Interim** (also referred to as Trained Interim Minister): Usually these pastors have specialized training* in transitional ministry or other identified skillsets useful during the transition and self-study process. Often intentional interim pastors serve in more challenging settings (i.e., misconduct, death of a pastor, conflict, or loss of congregational momentum/purpose).

Since many terms are used when speaking about interim or transitional ministry, please note the following definitions:

- + **Bridge Interim:** After an intentional or traditional interim completes the initial work and the Ministry Site Profile (MSP) is developed, a bridge interim may cover until the new pastor arrives, as interviews and call votes finalize.
- + **Sabbatical Interim Pastor:** serves during a time of pastoral sabbatical, usually for a set time.
- + **Supply Pastor:** fills in for preaching and presiding. For most congregations, this does not offer enough coverage for pastoral care emergencies or leadership. May be a short-term solution until an interim pastor is available.

* imnedu.org, lutma.org



- + **Term call:** when a pastor is offered a short-term call (under 3 years) to a congregation. (This may be the outcome following an interim, in rare cases.)
- + **"Unintentional" Interim:** Sometimes, when the work of transition is not tended to appropriately, a congregation may call a settled pastor who ends up serving for a very short time, unintentionally functioning as an interim.
- + **Vacancy pastor or vice pastor:** Sometimes a neighboring pastor will help cover council meetings and arrange Sunday pastoral coverage (and is paid for their time).



FROM THE ELCA CONSTITUTION

***C9.06.** "At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor shall be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council."

***C9.07.** "During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in this 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 rostered minister 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."

During pastoral transitions, interim pastors can help congregations face particular challenges. The interim pastor is more than just a placeholder until the "real pastor" comes.



The synod staff person working with the congregation will help identify what interim pastor may be most appropriate, as well as who is available.

The interim pastor is appointed by the bishop. If more than one candidate is available, synod staff may present multiple candidates to the congregation for feedback and a final decision.

Based on congregational feedback, the Metropolitan Chicago Synod office and synod council will help the congregation determine what special gifts or skills would be most necessary in an interim pastor.

Interim pastors may be specially trained (often called an "intentional interim"), may serve while retired, or may serve while on leave from call.

There is much to do during these holy moments of transition and change. The interim pastor works with the congregational leadership through the tasks of looking at the past, planning and implementing transition, and looking toward the future. The interim pastor helps a congregation discern what God is calling them to be and do next. The interim pastor assists the congregation in completing assessments, self-study, and the Ministry Site Profile (the official document presented to pastoral candidates to introduce them to your congregation).



FROM THE ELCA DOCUMENT POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR ROSTER MANAGEMENT

"A congregation in a situation of significant concerns and stress related to a pastoral transition may benefit from the leadership of an experienced and trained [intentional] interim pastor. Situations in which this is particularly appropriate include the transition following a long pastorate, a congregation facing new



mission opportunities and/or a changed context for ministry, a transition following the resignation of a pastor related to disciplinary action by the synod, or a transition marked by significant discord or upheaval within a congregation.”

“A retired pastor or pastor on leave from call who serves an interim ministry is recommended by the bishop and signs an interim ministry agreement [covenant] with the congregation which provides for the compensation, benefits, and the specific goals and expectations related to the period of interim ministry.”



TASKS DURING THE INTERIM

What does an interim pastor do? What work will the congregation and interim pastor do together during this time of transition?

- + Ongoing Pastoral Care & Leadership – pastor will preach, preside, attend council meetings, and more
- + Congregational Assessment and Self-Study, with special attention to congregational trends
- + Creation of an MSP (Ministry Site Profile)

These three areas of work are ongoing shared work between the interim pastor, council, call committee, transition team (if one exists), other leadership groups, and members of the congregation.

Interim tasks will be contextualized based on the congregational needs and in consultation with synod staff.



FIVE FOCUS POINTS

The Interim Ministry Network (imnedu.org, provides interim minister training) identifies five important focus points of the interim transition work:



HERITAGE – Reviewing how the congregation has been shaped and formed

LEADERSHIP– Reviewing the member needs and its ways of organizing and developing new and effective leadership

MISSION– Defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction

CONNECTIONS– Discovering the relationships a faith community builds outside of itself

FUTURE– Developing congregational and pastoral profiles

Pastoral Care & Leadership

Per the ELCA and model constitution for congregations, an interim pastor shall have the same rights and duties of a regularly called pastor (including voice and vote as described in the congregation's constitution). Additionally, the interim pastor is part of the MSP site profile process.

Assessment & Self-Study

The Self-Study process encourages the congregation to:

- + review its priorities and assess whether they are currently aligned with the congregation's mission;
- + provide information for the call committee and future candidates about the congregation;
- + describe leadership needs which will guide the work of the call committee;
- + advise the bishop and staff as they consider appropriate candidates to recommend.



Usually, the congregation and interim pastor will together:

- + review the congregation's life and mission;
- + determine sustainability of the congregation at this time;
- + assess current congregational vitality and energy;
- + identify and address issues of conflict, grief and/or guilt that affect congregational life and ministry;
- + evaluate present strengths of the congregation;
- + consider and discuss the challenges and opportunities of the congregation in the next 5-10 years;
- + identify areas that God is calling the congregation to strengthen or adjust ministry focus;
- + identify its present context for mission (community context);
- + identify the gifts that are most important for the next pastor to possess.

The congregational assessment may include:

Resources

Financial situation

Building and property

Membership trends

Key leaders, teams, committees

History

Patterns of growth or decline in the recent and more distant past

Congregational size and organizational style

Key moments of conflict or trauma

Celebrating moments of success in the past

Mission Field Analysis

Who is the congregation's focused mission population?

Who lives in the congregation's identified mission field?

What is the relationship between the congregation and those in the identified mission field?



Analysis of congregation “system dynamics”

How are power and influence and decision making managed here?

Are there subtle patterns of unhealthy or dysfunctional interaction?

What current ministry patterns are unsustainable for this congregation?

Constructing a Vision

What new skills are needed?

What might the future look like for this congregation? (The new settled pastor will carry on this work after the interim.)

Creation of a Ministry Site Profile (Msp)

The Ministry Site Profile is used throughout the ELCA by congregations that are seeking a new rostered minister. Although this document can be completed by a congregational council or call committee alone, it is recommended that feedback and input from the congregation be included throughout the MSP completion process.

Financial Compensation: Before the MSP is completed, the congregational council should be consulted regarding the level of financial compensation the congregation will indicate on the MSP. Financial compensation includes salary, housing allowance, and health and pension benefits. For details, please refer to Metropolitan Chicago Synod compensation guidelines:



<https://mcselca.org/congregational-support/salary-guidelines/>

Years of Experience: On the MSP, the call committee will indicate the number of years of experience the congregation desires in the next rostered leader. The answer to this can be thought of in two ways: 1. How much experience do we desire our next rostered minister to have coming into our congregation? 2. At what level of experience are we able to compensate?



The Ministry Site Profile must be completed and submitted through www.elca.org.



https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Sample_Ministry%20Site%20Profile.pdf?_ga=2.96320728.517604669.1661881848-2067611525.1650378768

Please contact your synod staff person if you have questions in advance of this process.



COMPENSATION / BENEFIT GUIDELINES

The total compensation package for an interim pastor is normally no greater than the compensation package of the pastor who departed. This means that, in most cases, the interim pastor's compensation will be negotiated on the basis of (a) the base salary of the departed pastor, and (b) other pertinent factors unique to the congregation's situation. If the situation requires an interim pastor with specialized training, serious consideration may be given for a higher compensation package.

An interim pastor's salary should be within synod guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament. If the pastor will serve less than full time, salary should be within part-time guidelines:

 <https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Part-time-Ministry-Guidelines-MCSELCA.pdf>

Financial compensation includes salary, housing allowance, health benefits, pension contributions, and other benefits (e.g., mileage reimbursement, continuing education funds, etc.)

Additional Guidelines

1. One week of paid vacation for every 13 weeks of full-time service (equates to four weeks per year).
2. Contributions toward Portico Benefit Services for all clergy who are not already retired (health benefits and pension coverage).
3. Consideration for disability/sick leave for interim rostered ministers is recommended.
4. Payment of registration costs for attending the Synod Assembly when it occurs during the interim.



An Interim Ministry Agreement [Covenant] will be developed by the bishop and synod staff and will be signed by the interim pastor and congregation leader (usually the congregational council president), which describes the compensation, benefits, specific goals, and other expectations related to the period of interim ministry. See sample:



<https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Sample-Interim-Ministry-Covenant-Hourly-MCSELCA.pdf>

<https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Sample-Interim-Ministry-Covenant-Full-Time-MCS-ELCA.pdf>

OR use ELCA's Full-time Sample Contract



http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Interim_ministry_sample_contract.pdf

Dated contract will serve as the beginning date of interim pastor's employment.

PORTICO

Benefit Services

RESOURCES

Interim ministers often experience more frequent transitions between calls or assignments. Portico has a dedicated staff person for interim ministers and their congregations.



INSTALLATION

An installation may be scheduled for the Interim Pastor, similar to other installation services, and can be included in a Sunday morning service or at another time. See the sample installation:



<https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Sample-Installation-of-an-Interim-Pastor.pdf>



ACCOUNTABILITY

During the time of transition, the interim pastor is expected to submit quarterly reports to the Office of the Bishop.

 <https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Interim-Pastors-Report.pdf>

At the end of an interim pastorate, both interim pastor and congregational council will share an exit report with the synod office. (See separate documents:

 <https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Interim-Pastors-Evaluation-of-Interim-Ministry-MCSLECA.pdf>

and

 <https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Congregation-Leaders-Evaluation-of-Interim-Ministry.pdf>

If concerns arise during the transition time that cannot be addressed within the congregation's existing structures, please communicate with the synod staff person working on transition with your congregation.



FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS

If you are a rostered minister who would like to be considered for a specialized call from the synod council to interim ministry, please contact the synod office about your interest.

Resource Links Provided in this Guide

Congregational Interim Ministry Survey



<https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Congregational-Interim-Ministry-Survey.pdf>

Interim Ministry Network (for training and other interim pastor resources)



<https://imnedu.org/>

<https://www.lutma.org/>

Ministry Site Profile



https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Sample_Ministry%20Site%20Profile.pdf?_ga=2.96320728.517604669.1661881848-2067611525.1650378768

Synod compensation guidelines



<https://mcselca.org/congregational-support/salary-guidelines/>

Part-time ministry compensation guidelines



<https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Part-time-Ministry-Guidelines-MCSELCA.pdf>

Interim Ministry Agreement [Covenant] Samples



<https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Sample-Interim-Ministry-Covenant.pdf>



https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Interim_ministry_sample_contract.pdf

Sample Interim Minister Installation Service



<https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Sample-Installation-of-an-Interim-Pastor.pdf>

Interim Pastor's Quarterly Report to Bishop



<https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Interim-Pastors-Report.pdf>

Exit Reports



<https://mcselca.org/wp-content/uploads/Congregation-Leaders-Evaluation-of-Interim-Ministry.pdf>