

United Church of Christ

SEARCH AND CALL

**A Pilgrimage through
Transitions and New Beginnings**

SECTION TWO

TRANSITION TIME:

**Part One: Pastoral Vacancies and
Congregational Emotions**

Part Two: Securing Transition Leadership

*" . . . I am about to do a new thing:
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"
Isaiah 43:19a*

SECTION TWO

TRANSITION TIME

Part One: Pastoral Vacancies and Congregational Emotions

***“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
When you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
And the flame shall not consume you . . .
Because you are precious in my sight,
And honored, and I love you.”
Isaiah 43:1-2,4a***

A pastoral vacancy may occur under a variety of circumstances, and each congregation will respond to a pastoral vacancy according to its own patterns, history, and internal dynamics. Every church is a unique entity with a “unique personality.” Individual and group responses may include grief, fear, anger, denial, a sense of personal betrayal, relief, frustration, or indifference. Departing pastors will also be dealing with their own complicated emotions: sadness, disappointment, gratitude, anger, relief, or excitement about new possibilities.

The actual circumstances surrounding the vacancy will directly impact the “emotional tone” of the congregation. As you read through the following situations, locate the one that best describes your church and its present emotional environment.

- 1) The most common reason for a pastoral vacancy is the resignation of the pastor, frequently in order to move on to a new call. While there is a definite need to attend to the emotions of the church members, this particular pastoral transition is never a complete surprise. Because pastors do move on to other ministry settings, most church members realize that such resignations are a normal part of the life cycle of a congregation.

Overheard after a church council meeting, “We have had eight wonderful years with our two pastors. I never dreamed a clergy couple could work together so well. That resignation news tonight felt as if two pieces of bad news arrived at the same time. It is such a loss . . . but then we’re a strong church and we’ve been through this before.”

- 2) A pastor’s retirement is similar to a resignation, but the internal dynamics are often a bit different because most church members anticipate this pastoral transition. There

is not the element of surprise or even shock that occurs when a pastor announces that he/she has accepted a new position.

Overheard after a women's fellowship meeting, "The retirement dinner will be a good celebration . . . a grand send-off. She's been with us for such a long time . . . The elderly members are the saddest; they were counting on her to do their funerals. But then I know a few people are relieved that she finally announced a retirement date; they believe it really is time for a change."



Saying goodbye to our Pastor

- 3) A church may have experienced a serious decline in its membership and financial resources and may make the reluctant decision to move from full time pastoral leadership to half time. Or a new position may have been created because of the merger of two existing congregations, both of whose pastors resigned to make way for "fresh" leadership. While searches undertaken in these circumstances can sometimes be very positive, members may also enter into the search process with a sense of discouragement and even hopelessness.

Overheard after the annual meeting, "It costs too much for a small church to have a full time pastor! I guess we did the right thing in voting to search for a half time person. We're all tired of worrying about money. But I surely will miss Pastor Brian."

- 4) A growing, thriving church may conduct a careful study and conclude that they have both the program/pastoral needs and the financial resources to add an additional ordained person to their church staff. The search may be for a clergy "generalist" to help meet the church's need for more ministerial staff to provide pastoral care, worship leadership, and program development. Or the need may be for a pastor with a specific set of skills: mission and outreach, youth ministry, community organization, or educational ministries. Although some members may be uneasy because they fear the loss of a personal relationship with their pastor or the loss of an intimate church community, the overall response to a search process in these circumstances is usually one of great joy.

Overheard after the annual meeting, "This is such an exciting church. Our hands-on mission work attracts so many new people. The vote today to begin the search for a second pastor was wonderful . . . a good spirit."

- 5) If a pastor has been terminated by the congregation for reasons of poor performance or ethical misconduct, it is particularly important to address the congregational dynamics and the range of emotions with the assistance of your UCC Conference/ Association staff person. Often the help of an outside resource/consultant will be necessary. Some members may feel angry and betrayed while others may believe that a pastor they respected and loved has been treated unfairly. There may be

concern about the viability of the church because members have departed or have withheld financial support. There may also be concern for the pastor's spouse and family, particularly if some members feel the pastor has been treated unfairly. If careful attention is not paid to congregational dynamics during the transition time, it is almost a certainty that the next pastorate will be a difficult one.

Overheard after a specially called congregational meeting, "Pastor Beth is wonderful and would never do anything wrong . . . I just know that the woman in the nursing home changed her will and left all her money to Beth—rather than the church—simply because Beth spent so many hours visiting her. Those people from the Ministry Committee must have filed that ethics charge because they were out to get her."

- 6) Tragic circumstances such as the death or permanent disability of a pastor also create pastoral vacancies. An entire community may be grieving, and members may be concerned about the well-being of the pastor's spouse, partner, or family. There may be difficult challenges to face concerning occupancy of the parsonage and continued financial support for the family. Adequate time for the grieving process will be needed if the search is to be a successful one.

Overheard after a memorial service, "I simply can't stop crying. Part of me refuses to believe it . . . Rev. Kirkland had only been here for a few months when that drunk driver hit him. Jeanne and the children have barely gotten settled in the parsonage. It is all just so unfair."

The church community is a living organism, a setting that is unlike any other "workplace." Feelings among members will be intense when there is a pastoral vacancy, and church leaders will be wise to treat those feelings as "normal." Over-reactions will only intensify the emotional "churnings." Your Conference/Association Minister will be a wonderful resource because that person understands the emotional environment surrounding your particular vacancy. Consult with your staff person early in the transition process and often because she/he can assist you in securing the interim pastor who will best meet the needs of your church during your transition time.

***The church community
is a living organism,
a setting that is unlike
any other "workplace."***

Pastoral Transition and the Governing Board

As the governing board, you will be looked to for strong leadership during this time of pastoral transition. The church governing board (Council/Consistory/Executive Board) will have the opportunity to take on a "teaching role," making certain that members understand both the process and the possibilities involved in interim time. It will be up to the governing board to help members realize that the church is different from other

workplace settings and to interpret clearly the reasons why it is unwise to begin an immediate search for a successor pastor.

After reflecting on the preceding two pages, (***“Vacancies and Congregational Emotions”***) allow time for your governing board members to share openly with one another, responding honestly and confidentially to your own feelings about your pastor’s departure. Having had that conversation with one another, you—the elected leaders—will be better prepared to reassure anxious church members.

***As the governing board,
you will be looked to for
strong leadership
during this time of
pastoral transition.***

You will carry responsibility for overseeing the pastor’s departure arrangements and interpreting ethical guidelines for ordained ministers to the congregation. ***“The Departing Pastor”*** (SECTION ONE) will be a helpful resource in that regard. While attending to the closure arrangements, you will also begin to address the possibilities available to you in the selection process for transitional leadership.

“Securing Temporary Pastoral Leadership” (Part Two of SECTION TWO) describes the responsibilities of the governing board as you take on the task of securing temporary pastoral leadership; you will also find there step-by-step guidelines to aid your Interim Selection Committee.

Part Two also includes a detailed description of UCC common understandings and practices in relation to interim time and a description of the traditional tasks that a church and interim pastor undertake during a pastoral transition. Working closely with your UCC Conference/Association Minister, you will move through these steps with confidence and thus inspire confidence among all the parishioners. You will also discover that this process creates a new sense of openness to God’s Spirit within your leadership group. That Spirit will move among you freely and creatively as you experience interim time and begin to move toward a search for a new United Church of Christ pastor.



***During this transition time,
your governing board may find it helpful
to reflect regularly on Isaiah 43.***

Part Two: Securing Transition Leadership

***“Do not remember the former things,
Or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing:
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”
Isaiah 43:18-19a***

Interim ministry is the ministry provided to a local church during a pastoral vacancy. Your Conference/Association Minister will be an invaluable resource as you move through the steps involved in seeking appropriate transitional leadership. Practices will vary in Conferences/Associations, but the UCC staff person will always seek to be in touch with lay leaders and, where possible, to meet with the governing board soon after a resignation is announced.

The duration of interim ministry is, by definition, a limited one, limited by a clearly defined agreement among all the involved parties: the Interim Pastor, the local congregation, and the Conference/Association staff person. It is understood that all pastoral/professional relationships with the interim minister will terminate when the settled ministry begins.



If the pastor's departure will take place shortly after the resignation announcement, your church will want to arrange for supply pastors for a month or two following the conclusion of the pastor's ministry. That additional time will be needed for the Interim Selection Committee to complete its work.

1) Forms of Ministry During Interim Time: Designations and Titles¹

Approaches to ministry during transition time vary widely within our denomination and among those pastors who are called to this important transition work. In addition to various approaches to the transition time, titles for interim pastors also vary widely. However, certain **norms** are consistent among all conferences:

- the expectation that the interim will be time-limited;
- the expectation that the interim period will offer the congregation an opportunity to assess its history, mission, and unique ministries;
- the expectation that the interim minister and congregation will work together to address issues that would significantly impact the next settled pastorate.

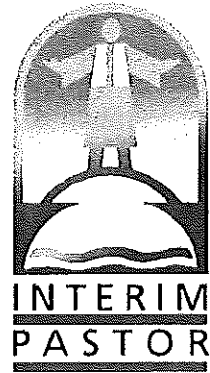
¹Additional information is available in the addendum found on page Section 2 – 17.

The Following Are Commonly Understood Approaches To Ministry During the Interim Time:

Intentional Interim Minister (also called “Transition Ministry Specialist”)

A Transition Ministry Specialist or Intentional Interim Minister provides for the ongoing worship life of the congregation, offers basic pastoral care and administrative leadership, and helps guide a church through the unique complexities, challenges and opportunities inherent in an “in-between time.” This minister will have specific training to help a congregation address complex issues: conflict with the previous pastor; conflict related to denominational identity; ethical violations by laity or previous pastors; relocation challenges; the grief that may follow the death of the current pastor; or the sense of loss experienced by the members after an unusually long or successful pastorate.

The Intentional Interim understands this ministry to be her/his vocation; in addition to the customary education and experience expected of a local church pastor, the Intentional Interim also will have completed coursework and attended workshops offered through a national, professional organization such as the Interim Ministry Network. Some Intentional Interims will limit their availability to specific geographic areas while others will relocate for the year or two in order to serve a particular church.



A Transition Minister must be able to quickly establish a high level of trust, have good entry and exit skills, and have a clear sense of self-differentiation. Such pastors will benefit from a leadership style that is open and adaptable to the faith and traditions within a variety of local churches, and a style that relies upon the gifts, skills and leadership capabilities found within each setting.

Sustaining Interim Minister (also Called Simply “Interim Minister”)

A Sustaining Interim Minister also provides full ministerial leadership for the congregation. While a Sustaining Interim may have the benefit of specialized training, such persons often make excellent use of extensive parish experience as well as their own inherent skills and abilities, seeking to keep the congregation focused on the unique opportunities and challenges of the time of transition. Sustaining Interims often choose these shorter-term pastoral positions because of their own life transitions or family circumstances; some will continue in interim service; others may return to a called pastoral position or may choose to retire.

Interim Supply Minister

An Interim Supply Minister fills a vital role as one who provides some, but not necessarily all, of the essentials of ongoing pastoral care and worship leadership during the time of transition. The Supply Minister customarily has a longer-term

relationship with the congregation and serves in that capacity for a definite period of time (distinguishing the role from “pulpit supply” that often varies from Sunday to Sunday.)

Transition Consultants

A Transition Consultant may assist a local church that does not have the financial resources to covenant with a trained Intentional Interim Pastor. Consultants may provide time-limited assistance with the congregational self-study and may be utilized as resources during the drafting of the Local Church Profile. Contracts with consultants usually are developed on a per-hour or per-unit (a block of 3-4 hours) basis. Your Conference/Association Minister will work with you if you are considering hiring a Transition Consultant.

2) Identifying a Small Interim Selection Committee

UCC churches vary widely in the processes utilized for designating an Interim Selection Committee. However, there is one normative practice: the committee making decisions about transition leadership should **not** be the Pastoral Search Committee for the called pastor. Many churches assign this interim selection task to the existing committee responsible for worship oversight and pulpit supply (deacons, elders, or other existing board); others designate a small subgroup (four to five) of the governing board. (*Local church bylaws seldom include information about the process for selecting interim leadership; however, be certain to check yours before moving ahead.*) Once the committee is selected, the members will covenant to maintain confidentiality as they follow the specific protocols recommended by the Conference/Association office. In order to avoid confusing this task with the later work of a Pastoral Search Committee, we suggest that you refer to the committee as an **“Interim Selection Committee.”** Naming of the Interim Selection Committee should be communicated to the entire congregation along with a brief outline of the process the committee will follow.

***... the committee
making decisions about
transition leadership
should not be the
Pastoral Search
Committee
for the called pastor.***

3) The Interim Selection Committee Learns About Interim Time

Your committee's first task is an educational assignment: to inform yourselves about the uniqueness of intentional interim ministry. Understanding the interim tasks, discussing the emotional environment of your congregation, and talking frankly with one another about your own feelings related to this pastoral transition—all these topics must be addressed before you begin your review of

potential candidates. Because you are in a discernment process, setting aside time for scriptural reflection and prayer will be essential components of your meetings.

The value of the interim time will be enhanced if the governing board develops clear goals and objectives to be achieved during this transition period. The specific goals your leaders identify can then be incorporated into the traditional developmental work of the transition process. Intentional interim pastors will customarily utilize their specialized training to assist the congregation in addressing five transition challenges:

Developmental Tasks of the Interim Period

Come to terms with our history...Isaiah 43 and Isaiah 44:21

- uncovering, interpreting and understanding where we have been
- knowing and telling our story
- discerning how God has been present in the life of our church
- connecting interpretation with motivation

Discerning our purpose and identity...I Peter 2:9-10

- stating who we are as the people of God
- coming to a sense of self
- sharing our confession and receiving God's assurance
- accepting how we are like and unlike other congregations
- understanding our unique challenges and opportunities

Leadership change and development...Acts 6

- reviewing style and character of past leaders—lay and clergy
- examining who has the "power" to make decisions and why
- understanding shifts and transitions of leadership and power
- identifying and supporting our gifts and strengths
- developing new leadership agendas

Reaffirming denominational/community ties...I Cor 16 and Acts 15

- review relationships and responsibilities with and to the UCC
- review relationships and responsibilities to local community
- promote a greater sense of "connectedness" within the church

Committing to new leadership and new ministry...Romans 12:1-13

- challenge existing assumptions about ministry
- express existing but unrealized expectations
- struggle with limitations
- develop a new vision for the future of our church¹

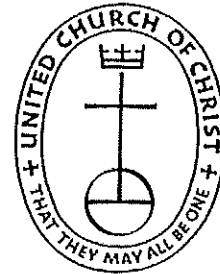
With the guidance of the Interim Pastor, the congregation will engage in these tasks throughout the transition time. The interim period offers a prime time for re-energizing the church, a time for clarification and spiritual renewal. Churches that take advantage of this period for intentional focus on issues of identity, mission, and renewal have found that the church is stronger and healthier as a result. The

¹ Biblical passages that offer opportunities for reflections on the tasks were suggested by the Penn Central Conference.

success of that next settled pastorate is directly affected by the way in which the members of the church have taken the time necessary to address these developmental tasks.

4) **Expectations and Accountability**

Whether the person providing pastoral services is full-time or part-time, whether the person is designated as a transition or intentional interim, a sustaining interim, or an interim supply, she/he is expected to maintain a close working relationship with Conference and Association staff, full accountability to the Association where the pastor's standing is held, and accountability to the UCC's expectations of interim ministers. In addition to the ethical standards in the Ministers' Codes, there are unique standards that guide the conduct of interim ministers. These norms reflect the values and traditional practices of interim ministry in the United Church of Christ.



5) **Non-Candidacy of an Interim Pastor**

The professional and ethical norm throughout the United Church of Christ is that those doing interim ministry are not candidates for the settled position. Both the congregation and the interim pastor are responsible for adhering to this normative practice, and a non-candidacy agreement should be clearly stated in the interim covenant. Make certain it is clear that the interim pastor will not be eligible to candidate for the pastoral opening.

Remember that interim ministry is a ministry provided to your church during a pastoral vacancy. The rationale for the interim not becoming a candidate for the settled position includes the following:

- An interim's candidacy compromises the principles of parity and open access to opportunities by denying unknown candidates with comparable skills the chance to be seriously considered by the pastoral Search Committee. Because the congregation knows the interim in ways it cannot know other candidates, the interim has an unfair advantage over others. This advantage is in tension with the Search and Call process of the United Church of Christ as expressed and set forth in the United Church of Christ Constitution and Bylaws. Bylaw 119 states that *"Any Ordained Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner may confer with the Conference Minister concerning a pastoral vacancy. At the Ordained Minister's request or at the request of the Ordained Ministerial Partner, his or her name shall be submitted by the Conference Minister for consideration by the committee of any Local Church where there is a pastoral vacancy."*

- A serious breach of ministerial ethics occurs if an interim takes advantage of the interim role to position himself or herself as a candidate for the settled position. Such behavior demonstrates significant disregard for the Search and Call processes of the United Church of Christ, a lack of respect for ministerial colleagues who may be candidates for the position, and a breach of The Ordained Minister's Code of Ethics. A Fitness Review may result from such behavior.
- All parties to the interim call agreement understand and assume an interim position rather than a settled call in the beginning of the relationship. There is a written agreement that includes the church, the interim, and the Conference/ Association representative; all parties affirm that this will be an interim relationship rather than settled call. As part of this agreement, all parties understand that the interim will not be considered as a candidate. All parties also agree that a genuine and good faith effort will be made to undertake a search for a settled minister.
- An interim minister's candidacy may subvert the importance of matching a candidate's gifts for ministry with the ministerial needs of the church. The ministerial needs of the church during the interim period are significantly different than they are during the settled pastorate. Calling one with significant gifts for interim ministry to the settled position may result in a mismatch of gifts and ministerial needs.¹

***Make certain it is clear
that the interim pastor
will not be eligible to
candidate for the
pastoral opening.***

6) **Identifying the Qualities Desired in Your Interim Pastor**

It is essential for the Interim Selection Committee to spend time identifying the specialized experiences and particular training that you seek. The ***"Interim Skills and Experience Checklist"*** in ***Resource #1*** will assist you in that work. You may identify your need for an interim with training and/or experience in one of these areas:

- a yoked parish;
- a church that has increased/decreased dramatically in size;
- a church experiencing the loss of a long-time pastor;
- a church divided because of strong theological differences;
- a church where there were serious staff conflicts;
- a church facing major financial losses;
- a church needing to renew its ties to the UCC.

¹ The non-candidacy material is taken from the Parish Life and Leadership Document "Ministry During the Interim Time" (Working Guidelines for UCC Committees on Ministry, Third Draft, May 2003).

As you identify the skills you seek, keep in mind that preaching, pastoral calling or other qualities that will rank high on your skill list for a settled minister may not be the most essential attributes you need in an interim pastor. Clarifying your specific needs will result in a transitional leader who can help you prepare for the next pastorate:

St. Luke's struggled for several years with the challenge of maintaining a meaningful connection with their post-Confirmation young people; numerous attempts to develop a "traditional" youth program had failed. Initially, the Interim Selection Committee expressed the hope that the pastor they chose would be an experienced youth leader who could start a dynamic program. With guidance from the Associate Conference Minister, the Selection Committee realized that a charismatic youth leader might well initiate such a program; however, without a strong base of congregational support, the program would not be sustainable when the interim period concluded. As the committee worked to identify their interim needs, they realized that their church would benefit from an interim pastor with the skills to lead the entire congregation in a process of assessment and planning for their total educational ministry program. That process would lay a strong foundation for work that would then be continued after the arrival of a settled minister.



Identify interim needs

When your committee has completed its process of identifying your needs during the interim period, resumes and background material on individual interim candidates will come to you through your Conference office. Depending on your Conference/Association practice, you may receive a standard UCC Ministerial Profile and/or an Interim Profile specifically designed to highlight transition skills. (**Resource #2** is the Interim Ministry Profile suggested for use by the UCC Office for Parish Life and Leadership.) The Interim Ministry Profile (or the UCC Ministerial Profile) should include the Background Check and Disclosure Form, the Statement of Consent, and the Criminal Background Check.

In some circumstances an Interim Selection Committee will wish to conduct a "national search" rather than relying solely on the candidate pool of interim pastors in your general geographic area. If your committee is considering such a possibility, make certain that you work closely with your Conference office so that all names of candidates from other parts of the country can be submitted to you through your Conference or Association office.

7) **A Word of Caution: Consider Only Recommended Candidates**

Because of the vulnerability of a congregation during a transition time, it is extremely important that you work closely with your Conference/Association staff person as you review applicants for your interim vacancy. **Only UCC interim pastors—or interim pastors from partner denominations whose resumes and credentials have come to you through the Conference/ Association office—should be considered for this position.**

***... consider only
recommended
candidates***

Interim time should never be viewed as a time to save money by reducing pastoral coverage or by choosing less than fully qualified interim pastors. It is often the case that unemployed clergy from various denominational backgrounds will hear of a vacancy in their geographic area and offer their services to the church leaders. Such persons may have had troubled pastorates, or they may have credentials whose accuracy cannot be verified. The pastor's theological views or pastoral skills often prove to be an inappropriate match, or the pastor may lack the training to provide leadership to a church in transition. Rather than an interim period that offers healing and growth for the members, the presence of a non-recommended interim pastor can instead result in division, conflict, and a delay in moving toward a search process.

It is also important for your Interim Selection Committee to be aware of another potential consequence of hiring an interim pastor from outside the Conference/Association recommended processes; that consequence is the loss of property and liability insurance coverage through the UCC Insurance Board.



Interim Selection Committee

8) **The Length of the Interim Period**

Because of the unique situation of each congregation, the length of the interim ministry period varies greatly from one church to another. Once the interim pastor is in place, it is common for the transition period to last 12-18 months. There are two major phases the church will move through during this period: the congregational self-study leading to the development of a Local Church Profile followed by the search for, nomination of, and election of a settled minister. Factors that influence the length of the interim period include the time involved in the congregational self-study, the circumstances of prior clergy departures, changing congregational dynamics, changing demographics, internal conflicts, and the pool of ministerial candidates.

9) Clarifying Compensation Arrangements

The salary package offered the interim pastor should be no less than that which was offered the previous pastor and should be consistent with Conference compensation guidelines. In addition to salary and housing, customary benefits include annuity, Social Security offset, health and dental insurance, disability insurance, and moving expenses (as necessary and appropriate). Funds for continuing education should be included; one week of education leave usually is available for every six months served. Vacation time is usually calculated at the rate of one week for every three months served. (**Resource #4 is a sample interim covenant/contract.**)

Like the pastor who resigned, the interim has had the necessary training and experience to provide weekly worship leadership and oversee the pastoral care and program needs of the church. In addition, transition pastors will have pursued specialized training in such areas as conflict resolution, parish self-study, staff supervision and evaluation, family systems, or organizational restructuring. A small number of interim pastors have pursued extensive training in order to serve churches where the previous pastor was terminated because of serious ethical violations. Such specialized training should be taken into consideration as you develop a covenant.

***Transition pastors
will have pursued
specialized
training . . .***

During the negotiation process with an interim pastor, it is wise for church leaders to recognize that pastors who experience a call from God to serve in transition situations often face difficult financial challenges. The length of their tenure is uncertain, and the availability of new interim positions is not always guaranteed. Interim pastors sometimes experience gaps of several months between positions. Because of the uniqueness of this ministry, a provision for transitional income is sometimes considered for inclusion in the covenant agreement. A typical package might include one month's transition salary and housing allowance as well as the payment of the next quarter's health insurance. (A portion of the health insurance would be repaid by the new employer if the interim pastor begins new work during this period.)

Providing a small amount of additional income between interim positions encourages experienced clergy to remain in this important field. Transition income also allows pastors time to prepare themselves spiritually and physically for the next interim position. Remember that you are seeking an energetic and well-rested interim pastor; one of your neighboring churches may have helped make that possible by providing a small amount of transition income. So, too, you may assist the next church by offering the same.

10) The Interim Selection Committee Begins to Consider Applications

- Remind yourselves of your confidentiality covenant. Church members should be kept informed of your progress but names of individual candidates should never be discussed.
- Reaffirm your commitment to a prayerful and non-discriminatory hiring process. Covenant together that you will make every effort to evaluate candidates on the basis of their particular gifts, skills, and previous experience and not on personal factors such as marital status, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities.
- Promptly acknowledge receipt of interim profiles and resumes submitted to you by your Conference/Association staff.
- Remember—as you read interim profiles—to review the list of skills and gifts that you identified as priorities for your transition leader; read with an open heart and mind.
- Notify the interim pastor immediately if you conclude that you have no further interest in that person's candidacy.
- **Check References!** The interim resume will contain names and phone numbers of references. Be certain to speak with one or two people who have experienced this pastor's interim leadership. Briefly describe your church setting and ask specific questions about the experience/skills you seek (e.g. *"How did the pastor handle staff supervision?"* or *"How did the pastor relate to church leaders?"*). Another key question during the reference checking process is *"In what ways has the congregation changed as a result of this pastor's transition leadership?"* If the candidate is from another Conference/Association, ask your own staff person to check a reference with his/her colleague in that area.
- Begin arranging interviews with one or two candidates. Your courtesy and hospitality make a difference: confirm time and place; send directions; offer to arrange overnight housing; review the candidate's material carefully; make certain the candidate has an opportunity to see the church (and parsonage, if applicable).
- Remind yourselves during the interview that both the candidate and the committee seek to be open to God's Spirit in order to determine whether this particular ministry setting is the most appropriate one for mutual ministry in Christ's name.
- Be certain that you have clarity about your financial package.
- Develop your interview questions carefully with a focus on your specific priorities. Be prepared to discuss the circumstances

***Remind yourselves
of your
confidentiality
covenant.***



Be open to
God's Spirit

surrounding the resignation of your pastor. Allow ample time for the candidate to ask you questions. At the conclusion of the interview, inform the candidate of your timetable, when he/she can expect to hear back from you, and when the candidate can expect to receive reimbursement for travel expenses (IRS rate).

- Remember that you are not selecting the candidate for your called pastor position. Rather, you are selecting a candidate with the specific training and skills necessary to ensure a fruitful transition time. You are selecting a candidate to help you clarify future directions for your church, not the pastor who will lead you into that future. While excellence in preaching may well be the highest priority for your called pastor, that particular skill may not be the most important one in your particular interim setting. Hearing an interim candidate preach in person may not be a necessity if you have had an opportunity to hear/view a tape or video of a worship service.
- Pray before making a decision.

In the formative days of the Christian Church, the Jerusalem leaders faced a very difficult decision; Acts 15 describes their deliberations and the way they listened to one another. Careful listening and thoughtful prayer led them to reach a decision and to describe it with these words, *"For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...."* (v 28a) When the decision about your interim pastor seems "good" to the Holy Spirit and to your Interim Selection Committee, then you will know you have completed your work.



Pray
before making a
decision

11) Completing the Process

Once the Interim Selection Committee has completed its work, the practices of your local church will determine which group makes the final decision to offer a covenant/contract to the selected transition pastor. Customarily the Interim Committee will make its decision and recommend the candidate to the governing board; the governing board will finalize the process, approve the contract, and offer the position. Rarely is the entire congregation involved unless church bylaws require a congregational vote. While intentional interim ministry is indeed a "calling," the interim pastor usually is not "called" to an interim position by the entire congregation; rather the interim provides vital ministry between the tenures of "called" pastors.

12) Welcoming the Transition Leader

The congregation should be informed as soon as possible when an interim pastor has been chosen. A brief biography that highlights the person's experience and skills should be included as well as an announcement of the first Sunday the interim pastor will be leading worship. The mailing (or newsletter article) should

also explain the reasons that the interim pastor cannot be a candidate for the settled position. (*A Liturgy of Welcome* is found in *Resource #5*.)

13) Identifying a Transition Committee

Many interim pastors will request that you select a small transition committee to meet with the interim pastor on a regular basis. This committee often is appointed by the Pastoral Relations Committee of the church or by the governing board. It should include at least one member of the Interim Selection Committee. The transition committee will reflect with the interim pastor on the five developmental tasks and will share honestly and confidentially about the progress of the interim work. The committee also may periodically communicate with the congregation on the status of the interim work.

14) When Do We Appoint a Search Committee for the Called Position?

Until transition decisions are made and ongoing pastoral coverage is assured, it is strongly recommended that the church not move ahead with the selection of a Search Committee. If the church is to take advantage of the opportunity to experience “a new thing,” then a time of openness is required.

- Moving ahead too rapidly does not allow “space” for members to adjust to and deal with a complex variety of emotions related to the previous pastorate.
- Moving ahead too rapidly does not allow your congregation to utilize the specialized talents of the transition pastor you've chosen. You will know yourselves better and have a better sense of the qualities you seek in a settled pastor if you pause to learn from your intentional “interim time.”
- Moving ahead too rapidly leads to premature closure of a renewal process that might enable the congregation to explore dramatic new opportunities for mission and service.

15) Relationship of Interim Pastor to the Search Process

Interims often have both specialized skills and extensive experience in assisting both a Pastoral Search Committee and a congregation during a self-study and evaluation process. The specific role that an interim pastor will play in terms of a congregational self study as well as the preparation of the Local Church Profile will vary a great deal from one Conference/Association setting to another. Any interim involvement with the search process must be clarified with the Conference/Association staff person. If the interim pastor does engage in consultative work with the Search Committee, all involvement must conclude before the committee begins considering ministerial

Interims may have specialized skills in assisting a congregational self-study.

profiles; names of candidates should remain confidential within the Search Committee and should never be shared with the interim pastor.

Some candidates may ask to speak with your interim pastor. Interim pastors will only respond to such requests at the invitation of the Search Committee and in consultation with the Conference/Association staff person.

Addendum: Some Additional Information Related to Transition/Interim Ministry

I. Another form of transition leadership

Within the past few years, a small number of Conferences and Associations have experimented with another form of temporary or transition leadership. This form of pastoral leadership is variously called "*Designated Ministry*," "*Renewal Ministry*," "*Redevelopment Ministry*," "*Transition Ministry*," or "*Turn-Around Ministry*." The practice has been used in a variety of different ways, most often in situations where the actual viability of a congregation is in question. For example, a large, historic, urban church that houses a tiny congregation with an aging membership may face urgent decisions—retaining its building, relocating, or closing. A church located in a farming community with a declining population may face the question of whether a possible church merger will ensure their survival. A church impacted by the closure of the town's only factory may need a major transition time to assess its economic viability. Such situations are the most common settings for renewal ministries.

The renewal ministries provide for sustained ministerial leadership during an extended period of time, usually a much longer period than a traditional interim pastorate. Depending on the outcome of the extended transition period, the practice often includes a provision for the renewal pastor to then be called to the settled pastoral position.

Such transition ministries do not fall within the normative understandings of Intentional Interim Ministry nor the normative Search and Call processes of the United Church of Christ. A decision to pursue a particular form of renewal ministry should only be made after prayerful discussion with Conference/Association staff and with the participation of the Committee on Ministry. In addition, the members of the church should be fully involved in the decision because, to some extent, the practice will suspend the local church's tradition of pursuing a search process where multiple candidates have an opportunity to apply.

II. One exception to normative interim practices

There are rare occasions during an interim ministry when a sincere effort to conduct a search for a settled minister has been made and, in the opinion of Conference/Association staff and the Committee on Ministry, it is unlikely that continued effort will lead to a call. When this is the case and when both the local church and the interim minister agree to reconsider their relationship, it may be in the best interests of all involved to make an exception to the normative non-candidacy practice.

If the interim pastor is to be considered as a candidate for the settled position, it is important that the Committee on Ministry have established policies and procedures to consider such an exception. These procedures should include:

- the circumstance when an exception might be considered (i.e. that further searching is unlikely to be successful),
- the parties to be involved in discerning the necessity or advisability of making an exception (the local church, Conference/Association staff, the interim minister, and the Committee on Ministry),

- the impact of the exception on the Search and Call Process, UCC polity and practice of ministry, and the normative understandings of interim ministry.¹

III. The title "Acting Pastor"

There are other situations in the life of a congregation where pastoral leadership is needed on a temporary basis because the pastor is unavailable. This short-term coverage is not interim ministry. The most common title used for such coverage—when the covenantal parties have determined that there is not a pastoral vacancy—is *"Acting Pastor."* (The situations include parental leave, sabbatical leave, and illness or surgery.)

Note: All scripture passages are taken from The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

¹Some of this material is taken from the Parish Life and Leadership Document *"Ministry During the Interim Time"* (Working Guidelines for UCC Committees on Ministry, Third Draft, May 2003).

United Church of Christ

SEARCH AND CALL

A Pilgrimage through
Transitions and New Beginnings

SECTION TWO

TRANSITION TIME

RESOURCES

*" . . . I am about to do a new thing:
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"
Isaiah 43:19a*

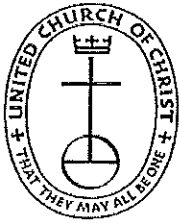
INTERIM PASTOR: SPECIFIC SKILLS DESIRED BY CHURCH

Resource 1

Interim pastors are expected to carry on the traditional work of the parish including worship planning, preaching, pastoral care, weddings and funerals, administrative oversight, and work with boards and committees. In addition, pastors who serve as intentional interim ministers often have specialized training as well as experience serving in specific settings (for example: in a church where the congregation had experienced staff conflicts). Using the following checklist, identify the skills and previous experiences you will look for in your new interim pastor.

- | | |
|--|--|
| _____ Parish Self-appraisal | _____ Professional Boundary Training |
| _____ Fiscal Management | _____ Church Revitalization |
| _____ Small Group Process | _____ Church Closing |
| _____ Transition Issues | _____ Dynamics of Long-term Pastorate |
| _____ Conflict Mediation | _____ UCC Polity |
| _____ Strategic Planning | _____ Multi-Staff Issues |
| _____ Federated, Union, Yoked/United Parishes | _____ Following Pastoral Misconduct |
| _____ Experience with Racial/Ethnic Churches | _____ Experience with ONA Process |
| _____ Church Size Transitions | _____ Death/Illness of a Previous Pastor |
| _____ Presence of Previous Pastor – Retired/Member | _____ Connection with the UCC |
| _____ Worship Changes, Inclusive Language | _____ Organizational Restructuring |
| _____ Lay Leadership Empowerment | _____ Stewardship Development |
| _____ Evangelism/Church Growth | |

Other (Specify) _____



INTERIM MINISTRY PROFILE

(To be updated after every change)

Resource 2

Date _____

Conference/Association of Current Standing _____

I. Personal Information

Name _____

Permanent Address _____

Email _____

Current Address _____

Ordained by _____

Place of Ministerial Standing, Denomination _____

Judicatory Office Address _____

Judicatory Phone _____

Best phone to reach you _____

Home _____

Office _____

Cell _____

Fax _____

Home _____

Office _____

Fax _____

Date _____

II. Education/Training

Education: College/Theological or Graduate)

Year

Degree

Additional Training, Study, for Interim Ministry
(attach separate sheet if needed)

Year

Place

Certification (list the organization and date received) _____

III. Professional Record

Two Most Recent Interim/Settled Ministries (note, full time/part time and date of service)

(1) _____

Judicatory contact (include phone) _____

(2) _____

Judicatory contact (include phone)

IV. Skills you bring to Interim Ministry

(List special training [give date/location] and experience related to each skill checked in space provided)

- | | |
|---|---|
| _____ Parish Self-appraisal | _____ Professional Boundary Training |
| _____ Fiscal Management | _____ Church Revitalization |
| _____ Small Group Process | _____ Church Closing |
| _____ Transition Issues | _____ Dynamics of Long-term Pastorate |
| _____ Conflict Mediation | _____ United Church of Christ Polity |
| _____ Strategic Planning | _____ Multi-Staff Issues |
| _____ Federated, Union, Yoked/United Parishes | _____ Following Pastoral Misconduct |
| _____ Experience with Racial/Ethnic Churches | _____ Experience with ONA Process |
| _____ Church Size Transitions | _____ Death/illness of Previous Pastor |
| _____ Presence of Previous Pastor--Retired/Member | _____ Connection with the United Church of Christ |
| _____ Worship Changes, Inclusive Language | _____ Organizational Restructuring |
| _____ Lay Leadership Empowerment | _____ Stewardship Development |
| _____ Evangelism/Church Growth | _____ Other (specify) |

V. What size congregations have you served and in what capacity?

VI. Your understanding of interim ministry within the context of ministry in the United Church of Christ

VII. Please attach the Statement on Ministry from your UCC Ministerial Profile

VIII. Availability and Position Sought

Date Available: _____

Conferences/Regions considered: Northeast _____ Middle Atlantic _____ Southern _____
Great Lakes _____ West Central _____ Western _____

Minimum duration of interim expected _____

I would be interested in: (check as many as apply)

_____ Relocating _____ Urban/Rural/Suburban (specify)

_____ Sustaining Interim (Part time/Full Time) _____

_____ Solo/Multiple Staff (specify) _____

_____ Transition Interim (Part time/Full Time) _____

_____ Senior/Associate Interim (specify) _____

_____ Supply

Congregation Size _____ (sm) _____ (md) _____ (lg)

IX. **Salary/Benefit Expectations** Total Package \$ _____ **OR**

Base Salary _____ Pension _____ Health Insurance _____

Housing Allowance _____ Housing Equity (if in parsonage) _____

Dental Insurance _____ Disability/Life Insurance _____

Social Security Offset _____ Professional Reimbursements _____

Other _____

XI. **What are your criteria for discerning an appropriate call for you?**

XII **References** (Include one judicatory staff person)

Give three telephone references from your most recent pastorates:

Name/Address	Telephone
_____	(____) _____
_____	(____) _____
_____	(____) _____

XIII. **Attach signed Statement of Consent and Background Disclosure form from UCC Ministerial Profile**

XIV. **Attach the Criminal Background Check from the UCC Ministerial Profile.**

XV Signature

In signing this form, I agree with the following:

Under no circumstances will I allow my name to be considered as a possible candidate for the settled position at the church where I am serving as an interim minister. I understand that if I allow my name to be considered, the Conference/Association/Area/Regional Minister may be expected to ask for a Fitness Review of my Authorization for Ministry within the United Church of Christ (as provided in the Manual on Ministry of the United Church of Christ).

Signed _____ Date _____

Signed: Conference/Association Staff Person where Standing is held: _____

Phone _____ Date _____

Note: This is not the official United Church of Christ ministerial profile. It is expected that you will ask for your current ministerial profile to be sent from Cleveland to the appropriate Conference/Association staff person in those instances when it is required.

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST'S EXPECTATIONS OF ITS INTERIM MINISTERS

Resource 3

Faith Affirmations

- Understands and affirms the Faith Affirmations found in the *Church's Expectations of its Candidates for Ordination*¹
- Has a sense of call to interim ministry

Church Loyalty

- Understands and affirms the expectations for Church Loyalty found in the *Church's Expectations of its Candidates for Ordination*
- Understands and affirms the Ordained Minister's Code, particularly as it relates to interim ministry
- Is committed to guiding churches through their transition to seek and call a new minister
- Supports the church's participation in the United Church of Christ search process while providing interim ministry service to that church and refrains from interfering or becoming involved in the church's search
- Will not become a candidate for the settled position in any setting where interim ministry is provided
- Advocates for fair and just compensation for all UCC pastors, including interim ministers and those who will be the newly settled minister

Knowledge and Skills

- Has the Knowledge and Skills named in the *Church's Expectations of its Candidates for Ordination*
- Has engaged in a disciplined study of and has acquired considerable knowledge and skill in interim ministry, including
 - understanding and appreciation for the nature of interim ministry
 - knowledge regarding the developmental tasks of churches in interim transition
 - skill for the performance of interim ministry

Personal Qualities

- Has the Personal Qualities found in the *Church's Expectations of its Candidates for Ordination*
- Ability to quickly form and appropriately relinquish relationships

¹UCC Manual on Ministry, Section Three, page 28.

- Acknowledges and tends to self-care needs amidst the dynamic transitions inherent in interim ministry
- Possesses the capacity to thrive amidst constant change inherent in life as an interim minister
- Respects, honors, and adapts to the cultural milieus and traditions of a variety of local churches

*The UCC Expectations of Interim Ministers is taken from the Parish Life and Leadership Document
"Ministry During the Interim Time" (Working Guidelines for UCC Committees on Ministry,
Third Draft, May 2003).*

SAMPLE INTERIM MINISTRY COVENANT

Resource 4

This covenant between the Rev. _____,
who holds standing in _____, and
_____ Church
of _____ is effective beginning _____, 20 ____.
(city and state)

Responsibilities and Duties

The Interim Pastor shall:

1. Intentionally lead the congregation through the congregation's Developmental Tasks:
 - A. Coming to terms with the congregation's history
 - B. Discerning the congregation's purpose and identity
 - C. Supporting leadership change and development
 - D. Reaffirming and strengthening denominational links
 - E. Committing to new leadership and new ministry
2. Fulfill the normal duties of a pastor including:
 - A. Lead and preach in the congregation's worship services
 - B. Administer church business and oversee the church staff
 - C. Work with the congregation's governing body and its program committees
 - D. Oversee the preparation of worship bulletin and newsletter
 - E. Visit members who are hospitalized, homebound, and nursing facility residents
 - F. Conduct funerals for members and friends of the congregation
 - G. Officiate at weddings for members and friends of the congregation
 - H. Provide counseling and make appropriate referrals
 - I. Teach confirmation/new member class for youths and adults
 - J. Maintain a collegial relationship with the area clergy association
 - K. Provide counsel to the Pastoral Search Committee when requested and focused only upon the process, not upon potential pastors

The congregation shall:

1. Commit to the process of self-study by working through the Developmental Tasks
2. Seriously consider implementing programs suggested by the Interim Pastor
3. Actively pursue the calling of a settled pastor
4. Function as the "Body of Christ," making visits to worship guests, members in hospitals nursing facilities, homebound, and inactive members
5. Maintain education, mission, music, and other ministries of the congregation
6. Continue to provide staff support

7. Support the involvement of the Interim Pastor in denominational activities, clergy associations, and Interim Ministers' Support Groups
8. Provide resources for professional consultation with specialists, when needed, in order to assist the Interim Pastor in accomplishing the goals of interim ministry
9. Establish an interim ministry/transitional team (Pastoral Relations Committee or other group) to serve as a confidential support and advisory group for the interim pastor, to monitor progress in accomplishing the developmental tasks and to act as a link between the pastor and the congregation.

Accountability

The Interim Pastor shall:

1. Be accountable to the _____ (governing body) through the _____ (i.e. Elders/Deacons) and ultimately to the congregation for the successful completion of duties
2. Maintain ministerial standing in his/her denomination.
3. Maintain contact with his or her Association and home congregation.

The congregation shall:

1. Support the leadership of the Interim Pastor in the congregation and community
2. Inform the Interim Pastor regularly of the progress the Pastoral Search Committee is making in preparing to call a settled pastor.

Salary and Benefits

For all services rendered by the interim pastor under this agreement, the _____ (church) agrees to provide the following annual compensation:

\$ _____ Cash salary (frequency of payment);
 \$ _____ Housing allowance
 \$ _____ Use of parsonage with all utilities; *
 \$ _____ Pension (14% of salary basis, i.e. cash salary + housing allowance or parsonage)
 \$ _____ Life Insurance and Disability Income Plan (1.5% of salary basis);
 \$ _____ Social Security Offset (7.65% of salary basis);
 \$ _____ Health Insurance;
 \$ _____ Dental Insurance

**Parsonage is valued at 130% of cash salary for purpose of calculating "salary basis" to determine benefits.*

Reimbursable Professional Expenses

\$ _____ Continuing Education;
 \$ _____ Professional expenses (meetings, etc.)

\$ _____ Mileage to be reimbursed at the current IRS rate;
\$ _____ Other (telephone, etc.)

Compensation shall be reviewed and determined annually.

The congregation shall pay moving expenses as necessary and appropriate.

Paid vacation: one week for each 3 months of service, or 2½ days per month served.

NOTE: When an Interim Pastor is serving a great distance from his/her home, negotiation of "family time," in addition to vacation time, is encouraged.

One week of Continuing Education time for each 6 months of service.

Due to the itinerant nature of interim ministry, if the Interim Pastor does not have a call at the completion of the interim, he/she may wish to negotiate a severance equal to one month's income (numbers 1-6 above).

Review and Evaluation

There shall be regular six month reviews of the mutual ministry of the congregation and the interim pastor. Those participating in the review may include the named church administrative body, chairs of committees, and the interim pastor. The purposes are to:

- Determine progress on goals;
- Provide the interim pastor and congregational representatives an opportunity to assess how well they are fulfilling responsibilities and the ministries they share;
- Identify and isolate any areas of conflict or disappointment that have not received adequate attention and may be adversely affecting mutual ministry;
- Clarify expectations of all parties to help avoid or to deal with any possible future conflicts.

A mutually agreed upon third party (Conference staff or designee) may be engaged to facilitate the ministry review process.

Exit Interview

At the conclusion of the interim relationship, the local church and pastor agree to participate in an evaluation of the Interim Period. This evaluation would typically include the following:

1. An exit interview attended by the Interim Pastor and key lay leaders; and
2. Completion of evaluation process suggested by the Conference/Association staff.

Duration, Renewal, and Termination

This covenant is initially in effect for six months and is renewable in three-month increments, as appropriate and agreeable to both parties, following evaluation.

Either party may terminate this agreement with a thirty-day (30) notice. Changes in the above covenant may be negotiated between the Interim Pastor and the _____ (i.e. Elders) of the congregation.

Non-Candidacy Covenant

The Interim Pastor agrees to the following covenant: *"Under no circumstances will I allow my name to be considered as a possible candidate for the settled position."* Likewise the church agrees that the Interim Pastor will not be considered as a possible candidate for the settled position.

In accepting this agreement, effective _____ (date), we hereby attach our signatures, making the Covenant binding upon us in accordance with the above outlined terms, subject to the approval of the governing board on _____ (date).

Interim Pastor

date

Congregational Representative

date

(Adapted, Ohio Conference and Connecticut Conference Sample Interim Covenants)

LITURGY FOR THE BLESSING OF THE INTERIM

Resource 5

CONGREGATIONAL LEADER: Dear Christian Friends: Baptized in the priesthood of Christ, we are all called by the Holy Spirit to offer ourselves to the God of all creation in thanksgiving for what God has done and continues to do for us. Today we give thanks to God for the Ministry that God has given to the people of _____ Church, and for the faithful service of its members and former pastors, most recently _____. And now we begin a new part of the journey with our interim pastor _____. We ask God's guidance for our ministry as we join together in prayer.

ALL: Gracious God, You have blessed and sustained us for many years and have given us this life together in the Christian community of this congregation. Be with us now, we pray, as we enter this in-between time. Comfort us as we grieve the past or look anxiously to the future. Bless us and guide us as we reflect upon our history and dream dreams about our future, so that we might be prepared for the next stage in this congregation's life. Give us courage, patience, and vision; and strengthen us in our Christian vocation of witness to the world and service to others, through Jesus the Christ. Amen.

INTERIM PASTOR: As we begin this interim time together, we begin new relationships. I have been called as your interim pastor, to be God's servant among you during this special time, until that time when you call a settled pastor. I pledge to you my commitment as a minister of the gospel among you: I will pray for you, listen to you, assist you in the tasks of this interim period, encouraging and challenging you as we move through this time together.

CONGREGATION: And we, the people of _____ Church, receive you as a servant of God and pledge our partnership as we continue to use the gifts God has given us, in the many ministries of the gospel in this place: in worship, education, witness, service and stewardship.

INTERIM PASTOR: May God bless us and lead us as we together embark on this interim journey. And may we view this time as a time of learning and growth as God's spirit instructs and prepares us for the future mission and ministry of the church in this place.

A HYMN MAY BE SUNG

(Adapted From the Interim Ministry Network Resources- www.interimministry.org)

