



**Southeastern Minnesota Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
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[semnsynod.org](http://semnsynod.org)

## Call Process Manual

**Manual for Intentional Interim Ministry**  
(This manual is specific to Intentional Interim Ministry)  
**For the Intentional Interim Pastor and Congregational Council**

## **Intentional Interim Ministry in the Congregation**

Life is a series of transitions from birth to death. At best, transition, though sometimes 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 congregations drained of spirit and hope. In all instances, transitions are easier if there is a system of nurture and support in place to assist the individual or the congregation through this time of transition. For congregations, this support and nurture may be provided by an intentional interim pastor who is contracted to assist the congregation during transition.

When a rostered leader leaves a congregation, the congregation experiences a loss. This loss is best resolved during the time of transition before a new leader is called and installed. An intentional interim pastor can provide both this support as well as helping to guide the congregation through a period of self-study in preparing for the next chapter in their history.

### **Intentional Interim Pastor (specially trained in pastoral leadership through transition)**

Those who serve as intentional interim pastors are required to have or are in the process of completing intentional interim training. The synod council issues an interim call; the congregation council works with the synod office and interim pastor to negotiate the terms of the letter of agreement. An intentional interim pastor who receives a synod council call *is not* available as a candidate<sup>1</sup> for the settled call to the congregation. An intentional interim pastor signs a Letter of Agreement for Interim Ministry.

*Intentional Interim Pastor, part-time:* Depending on local circumstances and their personal availability, this pastor serves the congregation in a limited way in the role and also provides support and guidance in processing through specific needs and concerns of the congregation.

*Intentional Interim Pastor, full-time:* This pastor serves the congregation full-time during the transitional period with all of the usual pastoral duties of a full-time pastor as well as provides support and guidance in processing through specific needs and concerns of the congregation.

## **SEMN Synod Compensation/Benefit Guidelines for Intentional Interim Pastors**

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.* In most circumstances, the "bottom line" of compensation and benefits for the interim will equal the compensation and benefits of the departed pastor, without regard to years of experience, although the compensation may be parceled out differently.

### **Additional Guidelines:**

1. One week of paid vacation for every 13 weeks of full-time service.
2. Contributions toward Portico Benefit Services for all clergy who are not already retired.
3. Premium payments for retired clergy who are still contributing to their coverage for medical insurance.
4. Consideration for disability/sick leave for interim rostered ministers is recommended.
5. Four days of paid continuing education leave and a continuing education allowance of \$250 for every 3 months of full-time service.
6. Payment of registration costs for attending the Synod Assembly and the Bishop's Theological Conference when these events occur during the interim.

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<sup>1</sup> Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2019: pg 8.

7. Reimbursement for auto expenses and professional expense incurred during ministry in the congregation. It is often the case that congregations cover mileage for one round trip per week between the pastor's home and the place where he or she serves. However, it should be noted that in accordance with IRS guidelines, this is taxable income.
8. Housing allowance may be granted to an interim pastor, even when a parsonage is available, in recognition of the need for intentional interim pastors to maintain permanent housing. If the interim pastor needs temporary housing and a parsonage is not available, the congregation shall be responsible for providing such housing for the interim pastor.
9. For part-time interim ministry, the congregation shall compensate the interim pastor based on a percentage of the compensation package of the previous pastor. This percentage is based on the time worked by the interim pastor in comparison with the time worked by the departed pastor.

### **SEMN Synod Policy for Intentional Interim Pastors**

- The interim minister is expected to have completed or is in the process of completing an Intentional Interim Ministry Training and is expected to provide a copy of the Certificate of Completion of Interim Ministry Training for their Roster File at the Synod Offices.
- The interim minister is expected to attend the monthly meetings of interim pastors at the Synod Offices.
- The interim minister is expected to submit quarterly reports to the Office of the Bishop. Upon completion of the interim pastorate, an interim exit interview is held and an evaluation of the interim ministry is completed by the congregational council and forwarded to the Office of the Bishop.
- The Office of the Bishop Staff shall share pertinent information about the congregation with the interim pastor.
- The interim pastor shall keep the Office of the Bishop informed of particular concerns or needs of the ministry setting, especially those that may affect the calling of a pastor.
- During the interim time in a congregation, the congregation shall engage in a self-study process. As part of that process, the interim shall encourage, support, and offer guidance to the call committee and congregation in their self-study, as well as help the congregation understand the inclusive nature of ministry in the Southeastern Minnesota Synod (see statement below).

#### **SEMN Synod Inclusive Ministry Statement**

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod understands the Call to Ministry to be inclusive, that is, not restricted by involuntary differences such as race, age, physical disabilities or gender. "For as many of you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3.27-28)

God's Holy Spirit authors the Call. Our church commits to being inclusive, not only out of justice, but because God intends diversity. God calls into ministry a variety of gifted persons for the wholeness of the Church. "Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord." (1Corinthians 11.4)

In practice, the Church and its congregations are best served when the talents of all the people of God are fully sought and affirmed for ministry. "To each is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Corinthians 11.7)

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod has voted in Assembly to be a Reconciling in Christ Synod. Therefore, it is advisable that during the transition process, time and attention be given to the study of welcoming all candidates into the Call Process.

Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries has prepared a study guide for congregations as they consider welcoming LGBTQ Candidates into the call process. It can be found at [www.elm.org](http://www.elm.org). Click on resources and there is a short video and a study guide entitled "Enrich and Transform."

The United Church of Christ has a wonderful video about welcoming rostered leaders who might be different than expected. It can be shown during the transition period and is about 25 minutes long. It is called *Sailing on Faith* and is the actual story of a transition in a congregation.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4\\_WIEXBjqQ&list=FLZFoInxwQZ1J\\_tFjr45cB\\_A&index=4&t=0s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4_WIEXBjqQ&list=FLZFoInxwQZ1J_tFjr45cB_A&index=4&t=0s)

- While the interim pastor works with the call committee to Phase Two: Self-Study process for the congregation, he or she shall not participate in Phase Three and Phase Four of the Call Process.
- New programs may be initiated by the congregation council during the interim, in consultation with the interim pastor.

## Commonly Asked Questions

### A. What is the *Purpose of Intentional Interim Ministry*?

Interim ministry provides appropriate and effective pastoral leadership from a time shortly after the current pastor leaves to shortly before the arrival of the next called pastor. There are two general types of interim ministry.

1. Following a pastoral resignation or retirement. As well as the usual tasks of congregational ministry, the interim leads the congregation through a period of self-study.
2. Following a long term pastor, a difficult period of congregational conflict or as the result of a disciplinary action.

Experience has shown that these and similar situations need to be addressed in an intentional way so that the congregation may heal and be prepared to move into its future with confidence.

### B. What are the *Tasks of Interim Ministry*?

The Interim Pastor encourages the congregation to engage in a period of self-study. During this time, several tasks are accomplished:

- **Coming to terms with history.** Often the interim pastor will lead the congregation in a process of exploring its past, so that it can deal with experiences of loss, grief, anger or anguish. Letting go of the former pastor is a crucial dynamic in this task.
- **Discovering a new identity.** During the interim period, the congregation has the opportunity to evaluate itself and its ministry. It is the time to analyze its present reality and to consider what God is calling the congregation to do and to be in the next chapter of its life.
- **Allowing for leadership change.** New patterns of lay involvement often follow the resignation of a pastor. Persons who had been actively involved may step back from leadership and others may step forward. The interim period can be a time when development and preparation of lay leadership calls for special attention.
- **Strengthening denominational relationships.** During the interim period, a congregation frequently is in closer contact with the Office of the Bishop and ELCA Churchwide resources.
- **Commitment to new leadership and a new future.** Renewed commitment to the Gospel is a primary goal of the time of transition. During this period, a congregation can ready itself spiritually in order to enter into partnership with a new pastoral leader.

### C. What are the *Goals for the Interim Time*?

The transition time serves as a time to bring closure to the previous pastoral relationship and to enable to congregation to welcome new leadership with openness and vision. The Interim pastor assists the congregation in increasing its awareness of its own style and the gifts within its membership that are available for ministry. The interim pastor, by bringing his or her own gifts and style of ministry, opens up possibilities for the congregation to accept and welcome styles of pastoral ministry that differ from the previous pastor's.

The transition time also serves as a time to consider the congregation's mission and ministry and to clarify its vision for its future. It is a time for the congregation to dream, set goals and new visions for its future ministry. The interim pastor can work with the congregation to address concerns and conflicts that are present within the congregation, its leadership and its staff. As these processes are completed, the congregational Ministry Site Profile is developed.

### D. What is the *Pastoral Ministry during the Interim Period*?

- Most interim pastors will engage in many of the normal tasks of ministry, including
- Leading worship, preaching and administering the Sacraments
- Teaching confirmation ministry and adult education
- Pastoral care, including visitation of shut-ins, nursing home residents, hospital visits, bereavement visits, etc.
- Special services, including funerals and weddings
- Administrative tasks such as working with the congregation council and staff
- Participating in youth and community events

In addition, interim pastors are expected to participate in synod and conference events and in the monthly meetings of Interim pastors at the Synod Office.

### **E. What are the *General Characteristics of the Interim Pastor?***

Interim Ministry is a specialized form of the ordained ministry. Most often, an interim pastor has received specific training to assist congregations as they journey through the transition process.

The interim pastor:

- Is a member of the ordained clergy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or one of our full communion partner denominations.
- Has developed skills in group dynamics and organization behavior.
- Has the skills, abilities and temperament to deal with conflict situations and systems behavior.
- Has the ability to work within a shortened time frame.
- Has a healthy self-concept and pastoral identity which enables acceptance of the reality that he or she will only be in the congregation for a short while.
- Is trained to center on the task of moving the congregation toward the goal of calling its next pastor.
- Is first and foremost a good pastor.

### **F. Can the *Interim Pastor be Considered for the Settled Call?***

*Except from the Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2019: pg 8.*

\*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 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.*

### **G. Why Can't We Call Our Interim Pastor?**

*Adapted from the article "Why shouldn't we consider our Interim Pastor as a candidate for the permanent position?" Interim Ministry, Rhode Island Conference, UCC*

1. God's Spirit has someone else in mind!
2. The essential tasks that need to be addressed during an interim period may not get the attention that they really need. For example, calling the interim might interfere with doing the necessary grief work regarding the loss of a former pastor. Also, an Interim Pastor may need to do some things in the interim period that he or she would not do if anticipating that he or she might be called as the permanent pastor.
3. Calling a trained interim specialist and his/her acceptance would remove this person from the small pool of people who are trained and able to serve in this capacity as an interim.

4. Such a practice could put into motion the idea that Interim Ministry is just a stepping-stone in the call process.
5. The interim has a leading advantage over other persons who might be interested in this position. This raises the issue of fairness for all prospective candidates.
6. While the interim may be favorable to most members, some may have developed some dislikes. This raises a concern about a built in resistance right from the start.
7. If the Interim is considered alongside other candidates and not chosen, this could cause hurt feelings and a “lame duck” conclusion of the interim’s pastorate.
8. The interim pastor and the congregational leaders sign an agreement about this principle at the beginning of the interim period.

### **Information Packet for Intentional Interim Pastors**

The following is a basic information packet that would be helpful for the interim pastor as he or she begins an interim assignment with your congregation. This will not only serve your interim pastor well, but it will also assist your new permanent pastor when that person arrives.

**Congregation’s expectations** for interim pastoral service including details regarding:

- Worship
- Confirmation
- Christian Education
- Visitation

**Congregational Information:**

- Congregational constitution and by laws
- A copy of the last annual report
- Copies of the congregation council minutes for the previous quarter
- List of the congregational council members, their offices and contact information
- List of committees and task forces
- Member directory
- Congregational calendar, including standing meetings and what has been calendared for the next three months, as well as a schedule of upcoming pastoral events (weddings, baptisms, special services, etc.)
- A copy of the last newsletter and access to enews.
- Examples of service bulletins
- Worship information, including the communion schedule, lay participation, musicians, etc.
- Detailed description of the confirmation program, including class schedule, curriculum, expectations of confirmation students, if there is a mentoring process, names of students and parents, etc.
- Information about faith formation and adult education, including bible studies, WELCA groups, current classes, who is involved in teaching, etc.
- Names of homebound, nursing home, assisted living residents and any members or friends with health issues or who have suffered the loss of loved ones within the past year.
- Information regarding pastoral care in the congregation, including information on any lay led pastoral care ministries (Befrienders, communion visitors for homebound members, Stephen’s ministries, etc.)
- A list of area churches and pastors, including ELCA neighbors. Information about the local ministerial association.
- Information about the hospitals where most members go.
- Information about the local funeral home(s) and the names of funeral directors
- A list of community organizations with which the congregation is involved.