



Intentional Interim Ministry

A specialized pastoral ministry of districts of the LCMS providing specially trained and experienced Interim Pastors to congregations

What is Intentional Interim Ministry?

Intentional Interim Ministry is not a "vacancy pastor" under a new name; it is quite different. Intentional Interim Ministry pastors provide full, ongoing, pastoral leadership and care. They are trained to help in resolving grief and conflict issues, and assist the congregation in preparing for new ministry, mission, and leadership.

They are designed to maintain, build or restore congregational health by offering a safe bridge from one resident pastor through a period of transition in what may be challenging times to the selection of the next resident pastor. Transitions are often marked by congregational stress and anxiety hampering ministry and making a fulfilling church experience difficult.

Why Should an Intentional Interim Pastor Be Considered?

In previous pastoral vacancy situations, congregations have sought the services of a "vacancy pastor" to provide a stop-gap ministry by supplying only the essentials. For example, Sunday morning preaching and teaching and maybe one day a week in the office. This approach is minimal and leaves the congregation with a feeling of incompleteness. With the Intentional Interim Ministry, the congregation is served by a pastor who provides to members:

1. Assurance that they have a pastor on site full time providing pastoral care and leadership.
2. Assurance that the ministry of the church will continue to move forward.
3. A trained pastor to deal with conflicts, heal divisions and aid in changing attitudes or expectations.
4. An opportunity to re-evaluate, renew and offer alternative views to mission and ministry.
5. Assistance to leadership in helping the congregation articulate its values, vision and mission.
6. A reduction in anxiety over the congregation's transition processes to a new resident pastor.

Congregational Dynamics in the "In-Between Times"

Intentional Interim Ministers come with skills to help a congregation understand what it takes to get ready for a new pastor. As an unbiased outsider with insight into the issues and concerns a congregation may face, the interim minister has the ability to be a step removed and view the situation with neutrality and perspective. These ministers come to the congregation knowing they are temporary shepherds and not eligible to become the future resident pastor. Their sole purpose is to bring the congregation to the best outcome.

What Situations Particularly Call for the Ministry of an Intentional Interim Pastor?

Though most congregations in a vacancy situation can benefit from the service of a trained interim pastor, circumstances which especially benefit from this ministry include:

1. A pastor's departure after a long tenure.
2. A multiple staff parish that loses its head pastor.
3. A congregation in a conflicted situation.
4. After situations of clergy misconduct.
5. Congregations which choose to use this as a time for renewal.

How Does Having an Intentional Interim Pastor Benefit a Congregation?

The Intentional Interim Pastor provides the congregation with complete pastoral care. He has also been trained to assist the congregation to complete the following tasks:

1. Understand their history - who they really are.
2. Redefine their identity - fully understand their strengths.
3. Facilitates the healing process - developing an attitude of trust.
4. Defines a careful resolution - achieving understanding and closure.
5. Managing transitions - understanding the changes in leadership during a vacancy.
6. Experiences new perspectives - allowing congregations to see different approaches to ministry.
7. Sets a Vision - developing a congregational commitment to a picture of its ministry for the future.
8. Set a fresh course - with a new vision, allows a church to set an informed course for the future

What Special Training Do Interim Pastors Receive?

A typical Intentional Interim Ministry pastor has 60 hours of formal training and a six-month period of supervised fieldwork. Through the process, intentional interim ministers also participate in peer review and in continuing education and conferences to provide the best possible benefit to the congregations they serve.

How Long May an Interim Pastor Serve Our Congregation?

This depends on many factors, but typically from one year to two years. The factors depend on the condition of the congregation, the depth of the challenge at hand and congregational leadership. Length of interim ministry is one of the early conversations a congregation will have with a potential interim pastor. However, the length of the call is not as important as the health of the church. The interim pastor is not a candidate for a call as the permanent pastor of the congregation.

What Costs are Incurred?

The Intentional Interim Ministry is handled through President Michael Newman and IIM Coordinator, Rev. Dr. David Bahn. A compensation package for an IIM should follow district guidelines. Realize that you will be receiving, in most cases, an experienced pastor who has received additional training. Ultimately, the salary is set by the congregation's leadership in consultation with the Interim Pastor and sometimes the District's IIM Coordinator.