

Episcopal Diocese of Vermont

INTERIM CLERGY/PASTORS & TASKS OF INTERIM MINISTRY A Brief Overview

The Interim Pastor/Clergyperson helps lead a congregation during the time between the end of one period of clergy leadership and the start of the next. There are two main types of interim clergy:

- Supply Priest . . . who usually is engaged only to provide leadership for worship.
- Interim Pastor . . . who exercises an intentional transition ministry, supported by specialized training for Interim Ministry.

The Bishop, as rector of congregations without a “settled minister,” and in conjunction with members of the Diocesan Ministry Developers, may have some thoughts as to which of the type of Interim Clergy is most appropriate in a given situation. For this reason we want to enter into partnership with the lay leaders and vestry to determine the best way to move forward. In any case, Interim Clergy extend the Bishop’ ministry as Chief Pastor and their relationship with the congregation needs to be carefully defined and clearly communicated. (*See “Interim Pastor Letter of Agreement”.*)

During an interim in settled pastoral leadership, every congregation needs to maintain effective ministry and work for a healthy transition. As part of that transition professional Interim Ministry helps the congregation to work through five, distinct “developmental tasks”:

The Five Developmental Tasks of Interim Ministry

1. **Coming to Terms With History** ... acting on the realization that the former priest has departed... that the parish family is different now ... acknowledging the past as shaping who the congregation is today while recognizing that history is only a prelude to the present and the future.
2. **Renewing Denominational Ties** ...seeing the Bishop and Ministry Support Team as a potential resource, partner and support ... using this opportunity to renew and rework diocesan relationships.
3. **Allowing Needed Leadership Change** ... adjusting to new patterns of leadership that naturally evolve when a key person leaves the organization ... allowing new leadership to come to the fore constructively.
4. **Discovering a New Identity** ... claiming a new awareness of itself as a congregation independent of the past leaders ... redefining who it is now as a family of God.

(Over, please)

- 5. Commitment to New Directions in Ministry** ... preparing to move into the future with openness to new possibilities that new leadership will bring ... wholeheartedly supporting the newly called priest.

These tasks and the methods employed to deal with them have been developed over the past 25 years and are extremely helpful for congregations experiencing transition. More information can be gotten from the Diocese of Vermont or from some of the resources listed below.

Finally, please **NOTE**:

Interim clergy generally do not work with the Vestry or Ministry Discernment (Calling) Committee on calling process matters, except with the authorization of the Bishop or Diocesan Deployment Officer; and persons serving as any kind of Interim Clergy are not eligible to be candidates for the Rector's or permanent clergy leadership position.

Written Resources:

Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministers (New from Alban Institute, 2000 (1-800-486-1318, ext 244)). Excellent update and expansion of Mead's interim book.

Critical Moment of Ministry: a change of pastors, Loren B. Mead, Alban Institute. 1997. Includes sections on "the first journey" which is the pastor leaving; and "the second journey" which is the classic section on the 5 developmental tasks of interim ministry.

Saying Goodbye: A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors, Edward White, Alban Institute.

Pastoral Transitions: From Endings to New Beginnings, Wm. Bud Phillips, Center for Study of Church and Ministry, Vancouver.

New Beginnings: A Pastorate Start Up Workbook, Roy Oswald, Alban Institute

Partially taken from *Choosing To Serve - Resources for the Calling Process*
Pub. by The Church Deployment Board of the Episcopal Church