

GUIDELINES FOR INTERIM MINISTRY



The American Baptist Churches of New Jersey

3752 Nottingham Way, Suite 101

Trenton, NJ 08690

609-587-8700

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. About Interim Ministry	3
II. Types of Interim Ministry	4
The Interim Pastor	4
The Intentional Interim Pastor	4
The Transitional Pastor	4
III. Some Dos and Don'ts of Interim Ministry	5
IV. Commonly Asked Questions Concerning Interim Ministry	6
How Does the Church Find an Interim Pastor?	6
How Does the Church Establish a Job Description for the Interim?	6
What Remuneration Does the Interim Receive?	6
To Whom Is the Interim Pastor Responsible?	7
What Should the Interim Leave Behind?	7
V. Salary & Expense Guidelines for Interim Pastors	8
Cash Salary	8
Housing/Overnight	8
Vacation	8
Auto Allowance	8
Other Expenses	8
VI. Suggested Agreement Between A Church and An Interim Pastor	9

I. ABOUT INTERIM MINISTRY

In the vast majority of cases, the pastoral transition is attended by positive energy. In some cases, however, such transition is attended by a good amount of negative energy. Nonetheless, when a pastor leaves the congregation he/she has served – whether voluntarily or involuntarily – a period of unsettling ensues because a significant dimension of a congregation’s – and a pastor’s - journey has come to an end. The congregation then enters a “between and betwixt” time – an interruption of continuity, an interlude, and a gap. This “in – between” time is a period needing great care.

- It creates a space wherein a congregation is given the opportunity to intentionally reflect and examine its recent past, history and heritage for the meanings of present experience.
- It is a gift of time that gives a congregation the opportunity to connect the meanings of these present experiences to the task of imagining a future ministry of the congregation.
- It is a time to proactively participate in “contextual forecasting” – asking concrete questions about the future ministry of the church in light of its gifts, its surroundings and social reality.

II. TYPES OF INTERIM MINISTRY

THE INTERIM PASTOR

The traditional interim pastor functions to provide the routine pastoral services or preaching and leading worship, visitation, officiating at weddings, funerals, attending board/committee meetings as requested by church leadership, and officiating in the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. This is commonly identified as maintenance ministry.

THE INTENTIONAL INTERIM PASTOR

There are special situations when a congregation may need additional time and specialized skills to navigate through a specific developmental issue or set of experiences before they can start a formal pastoral search.

It is advised that an Intentional Interim Pastor be considered in the following circumstances:

- If your congregation is in an “in-between” time
- Has just ended a very long-term pastorate
- At a critical point in setting new directions for its life and ministry
- A demographically complex and diverse congregation
- Experiencing severe or chronic conflict
- The pastor resigned suddenly or died
- The pastor left because of professional misconduct

THE TRANSITIONAL PASTOR

A variety of regressive factors occurring over an extended number of years may combine to create an unsustainable congregation. After a pastor leaves, it is realized that the congregation is dangerously weakened and no longer able to mount a traditional pastoral search. In such situations, a Transitional Pastor is assigned to the congregation with the goal of leading the congregation through intense revitalization. After an agreed upon time when stability is reached, the congregation has the option to either launch a formal pastoral search, or move the transitional pastor into the settled pastor role.

III. **SOME DOS AND DON'TS OF INTERIM MINISTRY**

Because the needs of the churches are different and the time required will vary, the responsibilities of ministry will be different in each situation. Prior to accepting the call to serve as Interim Pastor, a general job description will be provided by the church. Specific duties will be determined after the Interim begins her/his duties.

Generally speaking, the Interim will be involved in regular pastoral duties such as:

- Preaching and leading worship on Sunday, and leading the mid-week service if any
- Hospital visitation, crisis counseling, and visitation of persons with special needs
- Meeting with boards and committees as requested
- Facilitating office administration as requested
- Being available for weddings, funerals, and counseling

During the interim period the church has some special tasks to work on. For a description of some of these tasks see "The Tasks of a Church During the Interim Period" by Kenneth Blazier. In relation to these tasks the Interim will want to do the following:

- Listen with understanding to the hurts and dreams of the people, including anger or relief over the former pastor's leaving, as well as anxiety about the present and future
- Help persons understand the realities of the present situation and help them gain hope for the future
- Work to rebuild the trust level between persons
- Help the church maintain and renew its connection with the region and the denomination
- Prepare the congregation for the coming of a new pastor
- Work with the shifts in leadership that may take place in the congregation.

The Interim Pastor should *not* do the following:

- Assume long-term program responsibilities
- Project or initiate long-term goals, programs, or ministry opportunities
- Become a candidate for the pastorate of the church. This should be explicitly stated as a part of the written agreement with the church (A Transitional Pastor is the exception to this rule).
- Work with the pastoral search committee in any way, or serve as a consultant to the committee. All matters pertaining to the work of the pastoral search committee should be referred to the Associate Regional Pastor

IV. COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONCERNING INTERIM MINISTRY

HOW DOES THE CHURCH FIND AN INTERIM PASTOR?

The first step is to contact your Associate Regional Pastor. The Associate Regional Pastor will meet with the board or committee given responsibility for calling an Interim in order to review these guidelines and acquaint the committee with the process.

HOW DOES THE CHURCH ESTABLISH A JOB DESCRIPTION FOR THE INTERIM?

The church leadership first needs to determine which body is responsible to lead the calling of an Interim Pastor, as prescribed in the Constitution & By-Laws of the church.

The leadership needs to determine what it wants the interim to do. Prioritize the list from the most to the least important. In a final job description, list as many of these functions as you consider important for the Interim to accomplish.

Next assign an amount of time to each function. Don't forget that asking the Interim to do a weekly sermon and/or Bible study requires time for preparation. Most sermons and Bible studies will require a minimum of 1 day of preparation. Hospital and emergency visits must include travel time. The church may want to consider general visitation (other than hospital and crisis visits) to be the responsibility of members or a particular board such as the deacons.

Add up the total time required each week. Each 8 hours of time constitutes one work day. Of course, this will not necessarily mean eight consecutive hours, since preparation time may occur at home rather than the church office. Also, hospital visitation, church meetings, and counseling will vary from week to week. The board may want to specify certain office hours when the Interim will be available to the congregation, understanding the need for flexibility.

WHAT REMUNERATION DOES THE INTERIM RECEIVE?

Details concerning remuneration are listed in Section IV of this document. However, here is a brief summary concerning remuneration.

- Salary is based on the previous pastor's compensation and prorated for the number of days of service; (Weekly Compensation divided by 5 = Interim Salary daily rate in most cases based on a 5 day work week. Compensation is Cash Salary + Housing Allowance/Parsonage but does not include benefits.) If this is an Intentional Interim Position projected to be more than one year with full time responsibilities, then the church should consider full compensation and benefits
- Auto allowance based on current IRS rates
- Honoraria for weddings and funerals as customarily provided by family; (When there is no honoraria given, the church should compensate for this service at the normal day rate.)
- Reimbursement for work-related expenses such as region events, meals, parking, etc.
- One Sunday every 3 months is a day off with pay

TO WHOM IS THE INTERIM PASTOR RESPONSIBLE?

The interim relationship is under the supervision of the local church through its appropriate board or committee as designated by the congregation. The Interim Pastor is asked to work in full cooperation with the ABCNJ Region Executive and Associate Regional Pastor.

The local church board will communicate with the Interim Pastor concerning special tasks or needs that should be addressed during the interim period. Please be mindful not to exceed the number of hours agreed upon in the Church-Interim Pastor agreement.

Questions and concerns which have long range implications for the church need to be shared with the regional staff person. A monthly report shared with the church board or committee and the Associate Regional Pastor will be submitted to all the parties committed to this ministry.

WHAT SHOULD THE INTERIM LEAVE BEHIND?

An interim pastor can be very helpful to the next pastor by gathering and leaving behind some essential materials and information. These might include such things as:

- An updated membership list
- A complete mailing list including all friends of the church
- A list of those who are sick or home-bound
- A list of new members
- A list of prospective members
- A list of church organizations and chairpersons
- The church constitution and by-laws
- The most recent annual report
- Notes on special services or traditions of the church
- A file of Sunday bulletins and church newsletters
- A list of community agencies to which referrals can be made

V. SALARY & EXPENSE GUIDELINES FOR INTERIM PASTORS

CASH SALARY

The Interim Pastor's salary should be based upon the compensation (cash salary and housing) being earned by the previous pastor when he/she left. Based on the number of days or hours agreed upon, the Interim Pastor's salary should be proportionate to the previous pastor's compensation amount (refer to Section III for details). A housing allowance can be included as an exempt part of the compensation if the Interim Pastor is ordained and submits the amount to the church for official action and adoption. Follow IRS requirements related to housing allowance.

HOUSING/OVERNIGHT

If the Interim Pastor is serving full-time or required to stay overnight, the church should provide housing. This could be done by making the parsonage available, renting suitable housing, or paying for motel accommodations.

VACATION

Since Interim Pastors often serve for a year or more, it is important that the church and the Interim Pastor agree on how much paid vacation can be taken and how it will be scheduled. At least one week every three months would be appropriate. The church should be prepared to pay for supply ministers for any services that will not be covered during an Interim Pastor's vacation time, or to make some other provisions for those duties to be fulfilled, as is done with a Pastor.

AUTO ALLOWANCE

An auto allowance should be paid to the Interim Pastor (at the current IRS rate per mile) as reported by the Interim Pastor, plus tolls and parking fees. (If you are unaware of the current IRS rate, you may refer directly to the IRS website, at www.irs.gov website for more detailed information.

OTHER EXPENSES

Other expenses may also be paid, as agreed between the church and the Interim Pastor.

VI. **SUGGESTED AGREEMENT BETWEEN A CHURCH AND AN INTERIM PASTOR**

On the next two pages you will find a sample document that can be used by the church to create an Interim Pastor Agreement between the church and the Interim Pastor.

Once completed please provide a signed copy to the ABCNJ Associate Regional Pastor who is working with your congregation. Produce the agreement on your church stationary.

In keeping with the ethical standards of the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey, and in order to set forth clearly the basic agreement between the **[Name of the Church]** and **[Name of Interim Pastor]** as Interim Pastor, we agree to the following:

1. The Interim Pastor will begin ministry with the Church on **[Start Date]**
2. The Interim Pastor will provide the following services:
 - Conduct Sunday service(s). Weekly Bible study and prayer meeting, including preparation time
 - Hospital, crisis and other visitation, and counseling as needed
 - Facilitating the work of the church office as needed
 - Attendance of board and committee meetings as needed
 - Conduct special services, such as weddings and funerals
 - Provide other services as agreed upon
3. The Church agrees to provide the following:
 - A salary of **[Salary Total]** and housing allowance of **[Housing Allowance]** per week.
 - Travel allowance at **[Reimbursement Rate]** cents per mile (current IRS rate), reported within 60 days of travel, plus tolls and parking fees.
 - Reimbursement for meals required in route to and from the church or while performing ministerial duties.
 - Reimbursement for additional services such as Christmas Eve. Thanksgiving, etc. at the rate of **[Listed Rate]** (*suggested minimum is \$150 per service plus mileage*), and the same for weddings and funerals.
4. The church agrees that the Interim Pastor may take vacation as listed below
[Vacation Allowance]
5. The Interim Pastor will not be a candidate in the church's formal search for its settled pastor as mentioned in Part II of this document.
6. The length of service of the Interim Pastor is normally coterminous with the conclusion of the pastoral search process and the calling of the settled pastor. However, this agreement may be terminated at any time by either party giving the other thirty (30) days notice.

7. Upon completion of the Interim Pastor's service, the church will give a report and an evaluation to the Associate Regional Pastor regarding the services of the Interim Pastor.
8. Any other agreement should be listed here:

**[Other Specific Agreements between the Church and the Interim Pastor
Should be Listed Here]**

Date of this Agreement:

[Date the Agreement was Signed]

Interim Pastor:

[Printed Name]

[Signature]

Church Officer:

[Printed Name]

[Signature]

Print out the original agreement on church letterhead and have the Interim Pastor and the Church Officer sign three (3) copies. The original is retained by the church, the second is given to the ABCNJ Associate Regional Pastor, and the third is for the Interim Pastor's records.