

Intentional Interim Ministry: Resource for Governing Body of Community of Faith

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Pastoral Relations
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The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Intentional Interim Ministry: Resource for Governing Body of Community of Faith (January 2019)



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About This Resource

This resource expands on the policy found under section I.1.10 in *The Manual*. This resource is specifically for the governing body of a community of faith of The United Church of Canada that is considering intentional interim ministry. It answers the questions: Should we seek an intentional interim minister? And what are our responsibilities if we do?

This resource contains policy and procedures that must be followed; and best practices that provide information, guidance, and advice on the recommended ways to live out mandatory policies and procedures.

Intentional Interim Ministry: A Process of Change

Intentional interim ministry (often referred to simply as interim ministry) is an opportunity for a community of faith to take an intentional time out to seek spiritual and organizational renewal, to rediscover its identity, and to revitalize its mission. This resource is to assist governing bodies in discerning whether to have an interim ministry and, if so, how to proceed and what to expect.

For the policy on interim ministry, see *The Manual, 2019*, Pastoral Relations section I.1.10.

When Is Interim Ministry Necessary?

Interim ministry assists with transitions of all kinds. Some of the primary ones are

- disagreements and tension that are blocking a community of faith's life and effectiveness
- serious trauma, such as sexual or financial misconduct
- the departure of a long-tenured (10+ years) minister or the death of a minister
- inadequate finances for the community of faith's life and mission
- major changes in the demographics of the community of faith or its surrounding community
- the desire of a community of faith to rediscover its identity and mission or to move in a new direction in its ministry

Interim ministry is essential for communities of faith that are in crisis. Trained ministry personnel will lead the community of faith through its feelings of anxiety, struggle, pain, and grief to a place of healing and readiness for the next stages.

Interim ministry is also of benefit to any community of faith that wishes to manage change intentionally for a stronger, healthier ministry and future.

What Is the Intent of Interim Ministry?

A period of interim ministry may lead a community of faith to

- a clearer understanding of who the community is and how its past has shaped its identity
- discernment of God's call and renewed strength and leadership to respond
- energy and wisdom to make decisions about its future
- deeper connection to the surrounding community and to the United Church

Who Decides on Interim Ministry?

Interim ministry may be requested by the governing body of a community of faith, recommended through a community of faith profile, or required by the regional council.

How Long Is an Interim Ministry?

Intentional interim ministers are appointed for a specific, limited time. In the United Church, the norm is two years. An appointment can be longer or shorter depending on the goals set for the interim ministry period and the community of faith's readiness or resistance.

Who Are Intentional Interim Ministers, and What Do They Do?

Intentional interim ministers are experienced ministers with special training who have been designated by the Office of Vocation of the United Church. They will lead a community of faith to understand itself better with spiritual discernment and practical tools specifically chosen for the community's circumstances and needs. Interim ministers do not come with a predesigned template to fix all the problems, nor is the success of the interim ministry the sole responsibility of the interim minister. They guide the community of faith in the development of its ministry.

What Is an Intentional Interim Minister's Compensation Package?

Intentional interim ministers have specialized skills and training, so the minimum salary is 10 percent above the minimum for the applicable category. If they are not relocating for the appointment, additional compensation for commuting is normally paid (as a taxable benefit). The community of faith is required to make an annual payment to the United Church's Interim Ministry Sabbatical Fund. The rest of the compensation package is as it would be for an appointed minister.

What if an Intentional Interim Minister Is not Available or Affordable?

There are times when there are not enough intentional interim ministers for the number of communities of faith that are in need. Someone may also not be available to the location of the community of faith. In these circumstances, requests are triaged. If the community of faith, the governing body, and the regional council are able to manage change intentionally, a transition team, including representatives from the regional council, would still be appointed to guide the process.

Working with the transition team, there are two possible options:

Appointment of a Supply Minister and a Consultant

This option is used most often when an intentional interim minister is geographically distant. They are perhaps retired or acting as a consultant with several communities of faith.

They would meet with the transition team and the community of faith face to face every quarter or semi-annually and otherwise electronically.

The role and involvement of the supply minister and the relationship between the supply minister and the consultant must be spelled out clearly and explicitly. In some agreements, the work is divided between an experienced supply minister who does the regular tasks of ministry (worship and preaching, education, and pastoral care) and the consultant who works with the

transition team to manage the change process. In other agreements, the consultant acts as a coach to the supply minister, who then has a more hands-on role in the transition work.

Use of United Fresh Start Process and Facilitators

United Fresh Start (<https://unitedfreshstart.ca>) is designed to facilitate a healthy beginning to a pastoral relationship, but it includes a number of modules that can be very helpful for congregations in transition. United Fresh Start facilitators might offer appropriate modules for the community of faith to initiate discussion, education, and planning.

If affordability rather than availability is the impediment, the regional council might consider a financial subsidy to allow for the appointment of an intentional interim minister.

Key Roles during an Interim Ministry

Intentional Interim Minister

Intentional interim ministers are experienced ordained, diaconal, or designated lay ministers who are designated by the Office of Vocation. Intentional interim ministers are specially trained in

- facilitating and enabling change
- resolving conflicts and healing old problems
- being a listener, a consultant, and a teacher

The intentional interim minister works in partnership with the community of faith, the transition team, and the regional council to achieve agreed-upon goals during the interim ministry. The intentional interim minister's appointment is for a predetermined length of time, and they may not be called or appointed afterwards to a ministry position in that community of faith.

Interim ministry is different from supply ministry. An intentional interim minister has the specific focus of helping a community of faith move through a period of change. A supply minister provides continuity in the absence of a called or appointed minister, and normally avoids making changes.

Transition Team

A transition team is a group of four to six people from the community of faith and one or two representatives from the regional council who work with the intentional interim minister to help guide the community of faith through the period of interim ministry. The transition team is appointed jointly by the governing body and the regional council, and is separate from the Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee.

Membership

The community of faith's governing body, in consultation with the regional council, chooses four to six active participants from the community of faith to be on the transition team. The regional council appoints one or two representatives to the transition team. The intentional interim minister, once chosen, is also a member of the team.

Responsibilities

The role of the transition team is to lead the community of faith through a transition process. Its responsibilities are as follows:

1. Select the intentional interim minister and prepare for their arrival.
2. Provide leadership and work collaboratively with the intentional interim minister.
3. Guide implementation of goals and review progress:
 - Once the intentional interim minister is in place, refine the initial goals (set by the governing body and the regional council).

- Develop and oversee implementation of plans for the community of faith to work on the goals, engaging the community fully in the process of self-discovery, discernment, and decision-making about its future mission.
 - Regularly review progress on goals, and be alert to emerging needs.
4. Liaise and collaborate with the governing body and other relevant groups. A representative of the transition team is on the governing body for the duration of the interim ministry.
 5. Communicate and consult regularly with the community of faith and the regional council.
 6. Advise the regional council as soon as possible if the team concludes that the interim goals will not be met within the time of the interim appointment.
 7. Make recommendations to the governing body and the community of faith regarding future directions and next stages beyond the interim period.
 8. Participate in the evaluation of the intentional interim minister and the interim ministry.

The transition team is dissolved at the end of the intentional interim ministry. Its members may offer other leadership for a period of time to assist in integrating changes.

Qualities of transition team members:

- trusted
- respected
- prayerful
- spiritually wise
- gentle truth-teller
- able to listen and hear all perspectives
- able to commit time and energy
- regular attender
- regular contributor to the life of the community

The following may not be nominated:

- staff members, spouses/partners of staff members, former staff
- more than one member from a family unit/household
- anyone who is actively involved in a recent conflict

Choosing Interim Ministry: A Checklist

- The governing body contacts the regional council.
- The governing body, in consultation with the regional council, sets preliminary goals.
- The regional council confirms the decision to have a period of interim ministry, including
 - the preliminary goals of the interim ministry
 - the expected length of time for the interim ministry
- The transition team is selected by the governing body.
- The regional council names its representative(s).

Choosing the Transition Team

(See text box on next page for one possible process)

The members of the transition team

- are active participants in the community of faith
- represent a cross-section of the community of faith
- include some of the community of faith's key leaders
- each understand the challenges ahead and are prepared to make a time-intensive commitment over the entire period of the interim ministry
- are not members of the M&P Committee or staff

Team members are ready to

- consider the well-being of the community of faith first
- listen to one another and to the community of faith, and consider differing points of view
- work as members of a team, cooperate, and be prepared to be challenged
- hang in and speak up when feeling uncertain or hesitant, in order to create a faithful vision
- educate themselves about the process
- research options, think outside the box, take risks, and make room for learning
- invest time and energy to do the work well

The team needs skills and abilities in

- communication, social media, and public presentation
- facilitation, delegation, and encouragement of leadership in others
- staying calm during times of change, and inspiring hope and positivity
- research, writing, and computer use
- knowledge of the local community of faith and its culture
- knowledge of the United Church and its polity
- understanding the Christian story as told in both the first and the 21st century

One Way to Choose a Transition Team

Overview

1. The governing body decides an appropriate number of members for the transition team.
2. The governing body invites the community of faith to make appropriate nominations.
3. A subgroup of two or three designated people collects names, balances a slate, and ensures that those nominated are willing to serve.
4. The slate is recommended to and voted on by the governing body.
5. The governing body may decide to ask the community of faith to vote on the slate also.

Information for the Community of Faith about the Transition Team

The transition team includes four to six people from the community of faith, the intentional interim minister, and regional council representatives.

Transition Team Responsibilities

1. Set the goals (these will be presented to the governing body and to the community of faith for agreement).
2. Find the intentional interim minister, and work collaboratively with them to provide leadership during the interim ministry.
3. Develop plans that enable the community of faith to work on and fulfill the goals of the interim ministry.
4. Model a way forward.

To do this work the team will meet frequently (perhaps biweekly initially)

Nominations Process

1. Create ballots and pass them out during worship.
2. Explain the importance of the interim ministry: it not marking time between calls but time to discern God's mission.
3. Talk about the responsibilities and qualities of the members of the transition team and who may not be nominated. Ask for nominations for these "spiritual leaders."
4. Ask each person to write the name of one to three people who meet these criteria on the ballot. Ballots can be collected or placed on the offering plate.

Selection/Balancing Process

1. The ballots are collected by the two to three people designated as facilitators of the process.
2. They tally the names and list the names in order of number of times chosen.
3. The names are then sorted for balance, with attention to
 - age
 - gender
 - leadership roles in the congregation
 - length of time in the church
 - diversity of key groups in the church
4. Alternates from the list are also established.
5. The possible nominees are asked whether they are willing to serve.
6. The slate is presented to the governing board for election.
7. The names of the transition team members are presented to the community of faith.

Regional Council Representatives

One or two regional council representatives contribute to the transition team by

- providing an arm's length/balcony view of the community of faith
- listening and sharing their knowledge and experience to support the transition team in its work
- acting as a bridge between the transition team and the regional council
- representing the wider church

Governing Body

The governing body ensures that the interim ministry process is the central focus, while retaining its usual administrative responsibilities. In consultation with the regional council, it sets the initial goals for the interim ministry, naming in broad terms the issues that the community of faith needs to address. Once the intentional interim minister is in place, the transition team refines the goals so they are sufficiently specific and practical to guide the work ahead. The governing body should review the goals periodically to check how the community of faith is progressing with them.

To give the transition work primacy, the intentional interim minister's responsibilities and availability are not the same as those of a called or regularly appointed minister. The community of faith's governing body and Ministry and Personnel Committee are required to advise the community and other staff of the differences, and arrange coverage of pastoral duties that are not included in the intentional interim minister's position description.

A representative of the transition team is a member of the governing body for the duration of the interim ministry, makes regular reports, and strategizes with the governing body to maximize the effectiveness of the interim ministry.

The governing body collaborates with and contributes to the work of the transition team. The governing body needs to be aware of the community of faith's responses to the interim goals and work, and pave the way for the transition team. The governing body supports the transition team's ongoing communication with the community of faith regarding expectations, goal implementation, and plans.

Advice on Change from a Chair

- Be willing to facilitate changes to coincide with goals of interim ministry.
- Recognize that changes are painful but necessary.
- Encourage the community of faith to recognize the need for change.

Other Roles during the Interim Ministry

Community of Faith

Members of the community of faith are involved in the interim process, participating in discussion and activities that further the goals of the interim ministry. They are asked to learn about interim ministry, to support the leadership of the transition team, and to continue giving leadership in the community of faith. They formally covenant with the intentional interim minister and the transition team, and mark the end of the interim period in some meaningful way.

Community of Faith Profile

If a community of faith profile was in process when the decision to have interim ministry was made, that work stops, except as determined by the transition team. Often the interim ministry includes a community of faith profile process that prepares the community of faith for its future.

Search Process

The transition team, with the guidance of the regional council representatives, selects the intentional interim minister. The search for ministry personnel after the interim ministry will be initiated by the regional council. One or two members of the transition team normally serve on the search team to provide continuity between the work of the interim ministry and the emergent mission.

Ministry and Personnel Committee

With an intentional interim minister, the role of the M&P Committee is somewhat different from its role with a regularly called or appointed minister. The M&P Committee relates to the intentional interim minister for specific pastoral relations issues, including vacation and continuing education, and regarding relationships with other staff and volunteer leaders. In some interim situations, the M&P Committee may be called on to assist with managing conflict. However, the tasks and focus of the interim ministry are overseen and monitored by the transition team, and the intentional interim minister does not have the same accountability to the M&P Committee that ministry personnel normally would have.

The M&P Committee first needs to understand that the position description of the intentional interim minister is different from that of a regularly called or appointed minister. They can then provide support by clarifying the differences for the community of faith.

With less direct responsibility for the minister, an interim ministry is a good time for the M&P Committee to evaluate and strengthen its own functioning. Members of the committee might attend an M&P workshop, if available, and/or work with the intentional interim minister to better understand their responsibilities, develop their skills, examine current position descriptions, and learn how to prepare future ones. Doing this preparation will position them to be effective in developing and maintaining a healthy pastoral relationship in the future.

Transition Team Final Recommendations

When the community of faith has made decisions about its future mission and ministry and has done sufficient work on its other interim goals, the transition team makes recommendations to the governing body and the regional council. It may recommend one or more of the following:

- a community of faith profile, in preparation for a call or appointment
- negotiations with other communities of faith or agencies with a view to amalgamation or some other form of partnership in mission
- discussions with the regional council about selling, redeveloping, or renovating property
- any other appropriate measures to prepare for the future of the community of faith

If, by four months before the end of the interim appointment, the community of faith has *not* made decisions about its future mission and ministry and/or has not done adequate work on its other interim goals, the regional council, in consultation with the governing body, decides what appropriate action needs to be taken to ensure that the community of faith addresses its future needs. Such action might include the following:

- providing additional expert support for conflict resolution or planning
- providing support to assist with selling property, or amalgamating or disbanding
- extending the interim appointment
- planning for another specialized appointment following the interim period

At the End of an Interim Ministry

General Responsibilities

The regional council

- reviews the evaluation of the interim ministry, evaluates the current state of the community of faith, and receives and forwards to the Office of Vocation the evaluation of the interim ministry and the intentional interim minister's work during the appointment
- ensures that the community of faith has the human resources and tools to move forward in its new mission

The transition team

- works through the disengagement phase
- prepares evaluations (as described below)
- gathers all files and materials for the official record

The governing body

- leads the community of faith in the transition from interim ministry
- ensures that changes and decisions made during the interim ministry are carried forward into the new phase of mission and ministry
- engages the community of faith in marking the end of the interim ministry

Future of the Community of Faith

Four months before the expected end of the interim ministry, the transition team reports to the governing body and the regional council with recommendations for the evaluation process, the disengagement period, and the immediate post-interim period.

Evaluations

The transition team conducts an evaluation of the interim ministry and writes a final report. The transition team is also responsible for evaluating the intentional interim minister. Any evaluation is to be conducted in a just, participatory, and appreciative manner. These reports are due two months before the end of the interim ministry.

The intentional interim minister also does a self-evaluation for their own reflection and growth.

Distribution of Reports

The evaluation of the interim ministry is widely circulated to

- the community of faith
- the governing body
- the intentional interim minister

- the regional council, which forwards a copy, along with any comments, to the Office of Vocation
- those working on the community of faith profile or the search
- incoming staff

The evaluation of the intentional interim minister is confidential and is distributed only to

- the intentional interim minister
- the regional council
- the Office of Vocation

Others may receive this report only with the intentional interim minister's permission.

Closure and Continuity

At the end of the interim period, the transition team disbands. All files and reports are handed over to the governing body.

The governing body is responsible for acting on recommendations made in the final evaluation and for managing any outstanding agenda or issues.

The governing body and the M&P Committee ensure that the new ministry personnel has all the information necessary to continue the work that has been undertaken during the interim period.