

Intentional Interim Ministry: Policy and Procedures for Designation

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The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Intentional Interim Ministry: Policy and Procedures for Designation (January 2019)



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Definition

An “intentional interim minister” is a member of the order of ministry or designated lay minister who has been designated by the Office of Vocation to serve in interim ministry. (*The Manual, 2019*, section I.1.10.1)

Designation of Intentional Interim Ministers

1. Board / Office of Vocation

- sets the denominational policy for intentional interim ministers and for interim ministry
- maintains a database of intentional interim ministers with their designation history and current status
- considers applications and decides to designate, not to designate, or to remove the designation of intentional interim ministers for the United Church of Canada. These decisions cannot be appealed (*The Manual*, section J.10.3 d)).
- keeps a confidential file for each applicant who is interviewed for designation as an intentional interim minister:
 - The file contains copies of application forms and supporting documents, interview notes, evaluation reports, and any other relevant information.
 - The applicant is made aware of all materials in the file.

2. Regional Council

- educates themselves and communities of faith regarding interim ministry and interim ministry policy
- receives, reviews, and forwards the evaluation of an interim ministry from the transition team to the Office of Vocation – may add comments regarding the circumstances of the interim ministry situation
- receives and forwards the evaluation of the intentional interim minister from the transition team to the Office of Vocation

A. Qualifications for Designation

1. General Personal and Professional Qualifications

- normally has a minimum of five years of experience in pastoral ministry in The United Church of Canada and is knowledgeable about the United Church's theology, policy, and procedures, especially for pastoral relations
- has the following professional and personal qualities:
 - well-developed skills in all areas of pastoral ministry
 - a healthy self-image and a high tolerance for stress and ambiguity
 - ability to cope with constant change on a personal and professional level
 - awareness of their own response to conflict and ability to help others work through it
 - a sense of humour and the ability to avoid getting caught up in others' anxiety
 - skill and experience with planning and intentionality in ministry
 - flexibility in leadership style

2. Professional Education, Knowledge, and Skills for Intentional Interim Ministers

Intentional interim ministers are required to take specialized training to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for their work. They are expected to refresh their training regularly through related reading and appropriate continuing education.

Education for interim ministry must include

- instruction in theory by qualified and experienced interim ministers
- practice supervised by peers and instructors
- evaluation by self, peers, and instructors

The Interim Ministry Network offers recognized training. Equivalent programs may also be accepted as appropriate at the discretion of the Office of Vocation.

Individuals seeking designation as intentional interim ministers are required to demonstrate knowledge in the following areas:

- theories of institutional change, particularly as applied to communities of faith
- intervention tools and strategies to lead the process of change
- biblical and theological understandings of change and transition
- the five focus points of interim ministry (heritage, leadership, mission, connections, future)*
- the five process tasks of interim ministry (join, analyze, focus, connect, exit)
- the roles and responsibilities of the intentional interim minister, as distinct from those of other types of ministry
- theories of family systems, conflict management, strategic planning, and adult education
- the ecclesiology, policies, and practices of The United Church of Canada, particularly as they pertain to interim ministry

They are also required to demonstrate skill in the following areas:

- analysis of a community of faith from different perspectives and with different frameworks
- use of appropriate tools throughout the interim process
- biblical and theological reflection with community of faith on history, heritage, mission, identity, purpose, and structure
- awareness of own leadership style preferences and ability to adapt as necessary
- ability to maintain a non-anxious presence in an anxious system
- critical reflection on one's own practice of ministry in the midst of transition

* Developed by the Interim Ministry Network

B. The Process of Designation

1. Individuals

Individuals interested in becoming an intentional interim minister

- consult intentional interim ministry documents on the United Church website
- consult with colleagues to discern whether they are personally qualified and suited for this ministry
- may request a discernment consultation with the Office of Vocation minister

2. Regional Council

The Regional Council for the region in which the applicant is a member will provide a reference regarding the applicant's general suitability for intentional interim ministry at this time.

3. Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation

- reviews the application and checks the references
- may request additional information related to previous pastoral relationships
- appoints a team, which includes at least one experienced interim minister and one lay person with interim ministry experience, to interview the applicant
 - see Appendices A1. and B for suggested interview process and questions
- receives from the interview team a written summary of the interview and a recommendation to designate or not to designate the applicant as an intentional interim minister. A decision may be postponed subject to the applicant taking further specified training to be completed by a named deadline.
- takes formal action on the recommendation of the interview team
- may make suggestions for personal or professional development
- provides written notice of its decision to the applicant, the applicant's regional council, and the Office of Vocation for the applicant's personnel file
- ensures that it receives, and maintains on file, written acknowledgment from the applicant that the decision has been received
- the decision cannot be appealed
- if the decision was not to recommend initial designation with conditions, the applicant may reapply in one year if the conditions have been met. Applicant will provide evidence of the steps they have taken to meet the conditions.

C. The Process of Continuing Designation

Designation as an intentional interim minister must be confirmed after the first interim ministry appointment. Designation then continues to be valid for as long as the minister is in an interim ministry appointment and up to five years thereafter, unless designation is withdrawn by the Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation. After each interim ministry appointment, the evaluation from the transition team, with any additional assessment (signed by the minister to verify they have seen it) from the governing body and/or the regional council, is forwarded to the Office of Vocation for consideration.

An initial designation is valid for five years. If within that time an individual does not have an interim ministry appointment, their designation expires automatically, without formal action being required. In order to continue their designation, they will be required to take an interim ministry refresher course and to have a proposed interim ministry appointment.

1. Individuals

Individuals requesting continuing designation

- complete an online application
- complete and submit Intentional Interim Minister's Self-Evaluation Tool (see Appendix C)

2. Regional Council

The Regional Council for the region in which the intentional interim minister is a member will

- conduct an exit interview and compile a summary
- give the applicant a copy, which may be edited by mutual agreement
- send a copy of the summary, signed by the Regional Council and the applicant, to the Office of Vocation

3. Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation

- reviews
 - the application for continuing designation and all attached documents
 - the evaluation reports, exit interview, and any recommendations from the initial interim appointment
- appoints a team, which includes at least one experienced interim minister and one lay person with interim ministry experience, to interview the applicant
 - see Appendix A2. for suggested interview process and questions
- receives from the interview team a written summary of the interview and a recommendation to continue or not to continue the designation of the applicant as an intentional interim minister
- takes formal action on the recommendation of the interview team
- provides written notice of its decision to the applicant, the applicant's region, and the Office of Vocation for the applicant's personnel file
- ensures that it receives, and maintains on file, written acknowledgment from the applicant that the decision has been received
- the decision cannot be appealed

D. Removal of Designation

Designation of an intentional interim minister may be removed through the Office of Vocation. A request for removal of designation may be made by a transition team, governing body, or regional council. The Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation may make a decision (with or without such a request) in response to an unsatisfactory evaluation or other action related to the standing of the ministry personnel. The minister must be notified in writing and may appeal to the Board of Vocation through normal United Church procedures.

Process

1. **Documents:** The Office of Vocation receives a request for the intentional interim minister's designation to be reviewed along with evaluations of the interim ministry and the intentional interim minister. If the request is received partway through an appointment, the transition team, the governing body, and the region will be asked for current evaluations of the interim ministry and the intentional interim minister.
2. **Notification:** The intentional interim minister must be informed of concerns and the possibility that designation may be removed.
3. **Interview:** The Office of Vocation arranges for an interview with the intentional interim minister to address the concerns that have been raised. Representation from the transition team, governing body, and/or regional council may be included as required to provide interpretative comments on the context. The intentional interim minister may bring an observer with whom to debrief following the interview.
4. Prior to the interview, the interview team will review the intentional interim minister's file. The interview would follow the process used for continuing designation with particular emphasis on the concerns raised, qualifications for designation (see page 5), and effectiveness as an intentional interim minister.
5. **Removal of designation:** If the concerns raised are not adequately addressed in the interview, and if the interview team discerns that the intentional interim minister lacks the skills or calling for continuing designation, the interview team may recommend removal of designation to the Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation. A copy of the recommendation will be sent to the intentional interim minister.
6. **Remedial work:** If the interview team recommends removal of designation and discerns that were some remedial work done, the intentional interim minister might then reapply for designation, the goals for the remedial work must be communicated to the intentional interim minister in writing.
7. **Appeal:** The decision of the Credentialing Committee may be appealed to the Board of Vocation through normal United Church procedures.

Appendix A

1. Interview of Applicant for Designation

The interview team consists of a minimum of three people appointed by the Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation; at least one must be an experienced interim minister and one a lay person with experience of interim ministry, either as a member of a community of faith or as a regional council representative to a transition team. The applicant may bring an observer. The Office of Vocation minister may observe and act as a resource.

Prior to the interview, the team will choose a chair and secretary, review the file, and prepare questions (see Appendix B).

At the beginning of the interview, the chair will explain the process and possible results.

The interview will explore

- personal and professional experiences that have brought the applicant to their interest in intentional interim ministry
- interim ministry training, other related courses and programs, and further skill development
- practical and biblical understanding of intentional interim ministry
- personal qualities and skills and personal and professional suitability
- any particular issues raised by the applicant's file

Time will be allotted for any questions or additional comments from the applicant.

Note: At any point in the interview, with the mutual agreement of the applicant and the interview team, the process may be adjourned for a definite or indefinite time without a decision having been reached.

The interview team may agree

- to recommend initial designation
- to recommend initial designation with conditions to be fulfilled prior to application for continuing designation. These conditions may include further training or other expectations
- not to recommend initial designation with conditions to be fulfilled prior to re-application
- not to recommend designation

The interview team meets with the applicant (on the same occasion, if possible, or as soon as possible after) to discuss its findings and advise the applicant verbally of the recommendation. If the decision is not to recommend, the chair will ensure that pastoral care is available to the applicant.

The chair is responsible for checking references as needed. The secretary prepares a summary of the interview and circulates it to the interview team for editing and approval and then to the applicant. The summary concludes with the recommendation of the interview team to recommend initial designation, initial designation with specified conditions, or not to recommend designation.

The interview summary and recommendation are forwarded to the Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation for action.

A record of the interview and recommendation is kept in the applicant's file in the Office of Vocation.

- If the decision is to recommend initial designation with conditions to be fulfilled prior to application for continuing designation, these conditions are to be put in writing and communicated to the applicant, with a copy included in the applicant's file.
- If the decision is not to recommend initial designation with conditions to be fulfilled prior to re-application, these conditions are to be put in writing and communicated to the applicant, with a copy included in the applicant's file.
- If the decision is not to recommend the applicant for designation, reasons for non-recommendation are to be communicated to the applicant and kept in the applicant's file. This decision cannot be appealed.

2. Interview of Applicant for Continuing Designation

The process follows the one for initial designation. Review of the file will include application, evaluations from the transition team and from the governing body if submitted, self-evaluation from the intentional interim minister, and any comments from the regional council.

The interview will focus on the present (or just completed) interim ministry. Here are some sample questions:

- What were the goals? How did you facilitate the community of faith's work on them?
- What did you learn about the community of faith's systems and how did you work with them?
- Which of the focus points was the most significant during this interim and why?
- In what ways were your leadership style and skills useful?
- Where did you find your tool kit deficient? What is your plan for skill development?
- What sacred story would describe this interim?

Any particular issues raised by the applicant's file will also be addressed.

The interview team may agree

- to recommend continuing designation
- to not recommend continuing designation

Appendix B: Possible Questions for Designation Interview

Personal/Professional History

- What highlights of your faith journey and ministry experience have brought you to consider intentional interim ministry at this time?
- Did one particular experience confirm your decision to apply for intentional interim ministry?
- Did you have some doubts during your discernment for interim? If so, how did they affect your decision making?
- Have you been in a community of faith that has had a transitional ministry? What did you learn about interim ministry from that experience?

Training

- In the interim ministry training process, what have you found most insightful or helpful?
- Name the five focus points of interim ministry.* How will you use them as a guide in your work with a community of faith?
- What other training do you have that you consider relevant to interim ministry?
- What further skill development or training would increase your effectiveness for interim ministry?

Understanding of Interim Ministry

- What situation(s) in a community of faith would lead you to say, “They would do well with an intentional interim minister?”
- What do you consider to be the intentional interim minister’s primary role during a community of faith’s interim time?
- You arrive at your interim ministry appointment and find a transition team in place. How do you proceed to work with this team?
- You arrive at your interim ministry appointment and find no transition team; the community of faith has no idea that there should be one. How do you proceed?
- How would you help a resistant community of faith accept the interim process?
- What biblical story (or stories) would you consider using to guide a community of faith through the interim process? Why that story?
- What is the role of the intentional interim minister in the search process?
- What would you like to do in the first month/last month of the interim?

* Developed by the Interim Ministry Network

Personal Qualities and Skills

- What three skills do you have that are critical for interim ministry?
- Describe your preferred style of leadership. In what interim ministry situations would this be particularly effective?
- Do you see yourself in a particular interim ministry situation? Would other situations feel less suitable for you? Why?
- Describe, with examples, your typical reaction to conflict when
 - a) you observe it between others
 - b) you are involved
 - c) you are the target
- How do you engage a community of faith in discernment conversation?
- Describe a time when set goals and objectives for your ministry. Share the results.

Personal and Professional Suitability

- Some interim ministry situations can be stressful. How do you typically handle stress?
- Tell us about a change in your own life and how you handled it. Is this your typical pattern? If not, how was this different?
- How flexible and adaptable are you to change, surprise, and uncertainty? Give examples.
- How do you practice self-care?

*(Adapted from Hamilton Conference
Interim Ministry Committee, June 23, 2015)*

Appendix C: Intentional Interim Minister's Self-Evaluation Tool

Please use this set of questions to help you reflect on your interim ministry appointment just completed. Include this sheet with the completed Interim Ministry Evaluation package.

Where did you find your greatest or deepest delight?

How were you challenged and how did you respond?

What resources (people, wider church, books, etc.) were helpful?

Which of the five Process Tasks was the most significant in this IM appointment?

What did you learn about systems/interim ministry/yourself?

How did you practice self-care?

How did this interim experience affect your spiritual life?

(From Hamilton Conference Interim Ministry Committee, October 4, 2017)

Appendix D: Exit Interview

At the end of an interim ministry appointment, an exit interview will be conducted by one or two representatives of the regional council and the Office of Vocation minister. It is helpful if one of the interviewers has interim ministry experience or training. The interview team can tailor the process to the circumstances, consulting the suggestions below.

Preparation

The team will review the evaluation from the transition team and, if separate, the intentional interim minister and determine the issues to be addressed. One interviewer will take notes.

Questions

The interview will concentrate on the progress of the goals of the interim time and the health, well-being, and future of the community of faith. You might include these questions and discussion points:

- What were the goals? How well did the community of faith achieve these goals? What were the roadblocks to achieving them? How did you facilitate their work on them? Did these goals change, and if so, why?
- What did you learn about the community of faith's systems and what information needs to be included in a report to the next ministry personnel?
- What, in your view, are the strengths of this community of faith?
- What do you see as the main goal or objective for this community of faith as it moves ahead to the next phase of its ministry?
- Ask for clarification or expansion on any issues raised by the file.

The interview also provides an opportunity to debrief with the intentional interim minister. You might ask these questions:

- How are you feeling at this point in the interim appointment? What were some of the high points and low points?
- What have you learned? What new skills have you developed? What gifts have you received in this appointment that you will carry into your next ministry?
- What does the region and/or Office of Vocation need to be aware of in our work with transition teams and intentional interim ministers?
- Do you have any additional comments or questions?

Follow-up

The note-taker prepares a report summarizing the interview, which is circulated to all participants for editing and approval. Copies of the final report go to the regional council, the Office of Vocation minister, the intentional interim minister, the governing body, and incoming ministry personnel. The Office of Vocation minister will ensure a copy is placed in the personnel records and reviewed by the Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation.