



Southwestern Minnesota Synod Policy for Interim Ministries

The interim pastor plays a very significant role in the life of a congregation. When a pastor leaves a congregation, there are a number of termination emotions that must be dealt with if the congregation is to be healthy and prepared for the arrival of the new permanent pastor. The interim pastor is one who facilitates the expression of these emotions and brings leadership and stability to that situation. There are some ministry settings that require normal ministry between pastorates; other settings may need an interim specialist to help address specific needs.

When there has been a very long pastorate (more than 15 years) or when a congregation has experienced unusual challenges, an interim ministry of 6-12 months may be warranted. It is helpful for an interim pastor to know that he/she has a specific period of time to accomplish the goals negotiated in the contract. The following guidelines are offered to congregations needing interim ministry:

- The interim pastor is selected by the congregation after consultation with the synod staff.
- The interim pastor serves under a Letter of Agreement for Interim Ministry from the congregation. At the pastor's request, a Letter of Call may be extended by the synod council.
- The interim pastor is employed by and accountable to the congregation. The interim pastor is accountable to the synod in the same way as any other pastor.
- The synod staff shall share pertinent information about the congregation with the interim pastor.
- The interim pastor shall keep the synod staff informed of particular concerns or needs of the ministry setting, especially those that may affect the calling of a pastor. Upon completion of an interim pastorate, the interim pastor shall submit a written report to the synod staff.
- The interim pastor shall normally not be a candidate for call to the congregation in which he/she is doing interim ministry.
- While serving as an interim pastor, he/she shall not participate in the call process in that congregation.
- New programs or organizations may be initiated by the congregation council during the interim, after consultation with the interim pastor.

In addition to specific ministry concerns, various items pertaining to compensation shall be included in the Letter of Agreement for Interim Ministry between the interim pastor and the congregation.

Compensation and Benefits for Interim Pastors

The total compensation package for an interim pastor is normally no greater than the compensation package of the pastor who departed. This means that in most cases the interim pastor's total compensation package will be negotiated on the basis of (a) a base salary appropriate for his/her years of ordained experience according to the synodical compensation guidelines, (b) the base salary of the departed pastor, and (c) other pertinent factors unique to the congregation's situation.



If the situation requires concentrated effort above the normal routine, serious consideration should be given to an interim pastor with specialized training expertise even if this requires a higher salary. It must be remembered that restorative and creative ministry on the part of the interim pastor may be much more difficult and exhausting than regular parish ministry.

For interim pastors, the congregation shall also provide:

1. One week of paid vacation and benefits for every 13 weeks of full-time service.
2. Contributions toward the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Plans for all clergy who are not already retired.
3. Premium payments for retired clergy who are still contributing to their coverage for medical insurance.
4. Consideration for disability/sick leave for interim ministries is recommended.
5. Four days of paid continuing education leave and a continuing education allowance of \$175 for every 3 months of full-time service.
6. Payment of registration costs for attending the Synod Assembly and Synod Theological Conference when these events occur during the interim.
7. Reimbursement for auto expenses and professional expenses incurred in doing ministry in the parish. An interim pastor who commutes may be reimbursed for all or a portion of his/her commuting costs, as agreed upon by the congregation council. It is often the case that congregations cover mileage for one round trip per week between the pastor's home and the place where he/she serves.
8. Housing allowance may be granted to an interim pastor, even when a parsonage is available, in recognition of the need for intentional interim pastors to maintain permanent housing.
9. If the interim call contract is ended early by a congregation and the interim pastor does not have another call, it is recommended that the congregation consider providing ongoing support for another 30 days.

For part-time interim ministry, the congregation shall compensate the interim pastor based on a percentage of the compensation package of the previous pastor. This percentage is based on the time worked by the interim minister in comparison with the time worked by the previous pastor.