



Reflections on an Interim Pastorate

Note: The amounts of time given in brackets are the deacons' estimation of the time each week that may be needed to complete that particular responsibility.

The ministry of an interim pastor has at least two areas of focus. The most obvious is that the interim pastor covers certain responsibilities which normally fall to the pastor, including preaching, worship preparation, confirmation instruction, preparation for first Communion, administration, meetings, etc. Some categories and details of responsibilities are offered below.

The second focus is more subtle. It needs to be understood and appreciated in the selection of the interim pastor and the formation of the job description. The interim pastor, without involving his/her own personality, helps the congregation work through the call process. The interim pastor helps the congregation to grieve the departure of the previous pastor and prepare to receive a new pastor. If there are internal conflicts, the interim pastor helps to resolve them before a new pastor arrives. The interim pastor also serves as a resource to the Call Committee without unduly influencing its decisions.

Preaching: The interim pastor would normally preach. A significant portion of a day, either at the church office or at the interim's home, should be allowed for preparation. The pastor has normally written the prayers of the day. (*one day*)

Worship Preparation: The Worship Committee members (and _____) are significant resources in planning and scheduling worship. _____, our office secretary, is very able to produce the bulletin. Sunday worship often involves some special emphasis or activity. An hour or two each week should be set aside for this preparation. (This category includes preparing instructional scripts for special worship services such as Good Friday, etc.) (*one-two hours*)

Shut-in Visitation: The goal is to visit shut-ins each month, but practically, it is generally about 10 times a year. This is a ministry that could be done by lay people, although the shut-ins like to see the pastor regularly. Shut-ins at this time include the following persons: (*one day plus lay people*)
At home: _____ At nearby care centers: _____

Care Center Services:

1. Our Town Care Center – west edge of town at the corner of 1st St. and Sunset Blvd. – second Thursday of the month at 2 p.m. – non-Communion.
2. Next Town Over Apartments and Assisted Living – about 5 miles from church – east part of town at 111 Prairie St. – fourth Thursday of the month at 2 p.m. and 3 p.m., respectively – Communion.
3. Bigger Nearby Town Care Center – about 20 miles from church – south side of town at 1234 Vista View Ave. – usually every six weeks as scheduled – Communion when on the first Sunday (*considered with shut-in visitations*)

Hospital Visitation: The time needed for this varies greatly. Hospital stays are shorter than they used to be. The church office isn't always notified when people enter the hospital. There are many weeks when no one is in the hospital. There are some weeks when there are patients in two or more hospitals. Hospitals used by members could include: (list names, towns, miles from church, addresses, phone numbers)



Confirmation: The current confirmation program has been in place for almost 10 years and should probably be evaluated when the new pastor arrives. It could remain the same during the time of transition, unless the interim pastor has other ideas to consider. The program is on a three-year rotation. This year is scheduled to cover the Lord's Prayer and the Creed from Luther's Small Catechism.

The 16-week class format presents a challenge. Some effort will be needed to identify a curriculum to be used and adapted to this format. Further, Easter is extremely early this year, and it may mean that the last classes will need to be held after Easter, something not done recently. (*one day*)

Administration: There are a number of other items to which the interim pastor will need to attend. The office secretary (and _____) can be of immense help here, but time should be allowed for this as well. These include Church Council preparation, the monthly newsletter, correspondence, reports, agendas, etc. (*one-two days*)

Meetings: Scheduling the council, deacons, and trustees meetings on the same night (the third Sunday from September through May; the third Wednesday from June through August) is very helpful. Additional meetings may include the monthly Board of Education and regular, but not usually monthly, meetings of the Worship, Missionary, and Stewardship Committees, typically on Tuesday or Thursday evenings. Also, there is preparation for adult education on Sunday mornings and the Wednesday morning Bible study. (*considered with Administration above*)

Finally, the interim time period need not be a time when everything stays the same and no new initiatives undertaken. Three matters come to mind specifically:

1. There have been discussions about the congregation's need to discover a new way to incorporate young families into the fabric of the congregation. Several young families have joined recently and they need our continuing attention. During the interim, this matter needs to be watched over carefully.
2. Milestones Ministry could be a helpful resource for item one above. More importantly, all of our young families, old and new, need support in passing on faith to a new generation. Name and a few others have a handle on this. There is also a "Passing on Faith" gathering in Church, Town on Date that should be attended.
3. The council has discussed developing an e-mail ministry and using the congregation's web site more effectively. This is also something that can be encouraged during the interim.

To prepare for calling a new pastor, the congregation, with the interim pastor's guidance, undertakes a ministry study. This study encourages members of the congregation to develop a vision for the ministry of the congregation for the next several years in striving to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world. Throughout the study, the congregation discerns to do ministry in light of what God is calling them to do and to commit to that call. The results of the ministry study will assist the Call Committee in choosing a new pastor to journey with the congregation in ministry.