

# **THE INTERIM MINISTRY HANDBOOK**

of the  
New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ

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This Handbook is intended primarily as a resource for Interim Ministers.

Approved by the Interim Ministry Group and the Conference Minister of the New Hampshire  
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## **An Introduction to Interim Ministry**

The interim period is the time that occurs between the end of one settled pastorate and the beginning of the next. An interim pastor serves a church only during this period, and will not be a candidate for the permanent position. This limitation is the basis for the unique work of the interim pastorate, and it is the responsibility of the interim pastor to maintain the integrity of the position and the work.

### **I. The Interim Minister**

- A. Within the United Church of Christ, interim ministry is understood to be the specialized, time-limited pastoral ministry provided to a local congregation or other ecclesiastical setting during the search process for a person to be called to provide settled ministerial leadership in that setting.

The Interim Minister, like other authorized ministers in the United Church of Christ is subject to the oversight of the Association's Committee on Church and Ministry.

Within the New Hampshire Conference we understand these to be the different varieties of interim ministry:

1. **Intentional Interim Minister:** The Intentional Interim Minister provides for the worship life of the congregation, offers basic pastoral care, and supplies overall leadership while helping guide a church through the unique complexities, challenges and opportunities inherent in this interim time. S/he works with the congregation to create an atmosphere that brings about and/or sustains congregational health while allowing time for the search and call process to unfold in a non-anxious and intentional manner.

Intentional Interim Ministry is a specialized ministry that brings specific skills and experience to help a congregation deal with situations such as conflict, breach of ethics, or the special circumstances occasioned by a long pastorate, or boundary issues related to the presence of a former minister in the congregation or community.

The Intentional Interim Minister sees this form of specialized ministry as his/her vocation and has specialized training and experience.

2. **Sustaining Interim Minister** - Like the Intentional Interim Minister, the Sustaining Interim Minister provides for the worship life of the congregation and works with committees and boards. By providing full ministerial service, s/he frees up the lay leadership to focus on its congregational profile and other search related activities.

The Sustaining Minister may or may not see this form of specialized ministry as his/her vocation. While s/he may or may not have benefit of specialized training, such persons often make excellent use of their life experience as well as inherent skills and abilities, seeking to keep the

congregation focused on the unique opportunities and challenges of the time of transition.

3. **Interim Supply Minister** - As distinct from a pulpit supply minister, the Interim Supply Minister fills a vital role as one who provides some, but not necessarily all, of the essentials of pastoral and worship life during the time of transition.

- B. During the interim period, in addition to performing the usual pastoral role, the interim also helps the church focus on issues of identity and mission in specific and intentional ways, as it evaluates its past and present plans for its future. This is accomplished by giving careful attention to what the Alban Institute has identified as the five developmental tasks of a congregation in an interim time.

These tasks are:

1. **Coming to Terms with History**  
The congregation needs to complete its closure with the departed pastor, working through its feelings of loss, hurt, anger, guilt, etc. Gaining perspective on its past, both immediate and long range, helps the congregation prepare for the future. This challenge is crucial when there has been a long pastorate, an involuntary departure, or a conflict within the congregation. The resolution of these dynamics strongly enhances the success of the new settled pastor.
2. **Discovering a New Identity**  
Over time congregations change as they respond to various pastoral leaders, changes in their world content, and modifications in their internal circumstances. The interim time provides a unique opportunity for congregational self-study leading to a focusing on the congregation's present reality.
3. **Allowing Needed Leadership Change**  
A change of pastoral leadership often precipitates changes in the lay leadership as well. Old leaders may take a less active role while new persons become more involved. Many congregations address their internal leadership needs during the interim time.
4. **Reaffirming Covenant with the United Church of Christ**  
A change of pastoral leadership is a time when the local congregation may more clearly understand and experience its relationship with the wider church, often becoming more acquainted with its supportive resources. An opportunity also exists to strengthen the congregation's identity as part of the United Church of Christ.
5. **Commitment to New Directions in Ministry**  
As the interim period progresses the congregation becomes better prepared to move forward under new leadership, furthering a mission which is

emerging from its self-study and its understanding of its opportunities for service and witness. The congregation becomes eager to embrace new initiatives in partnership with its new settled pastor.

## **II. A Shared Ministry: Responsibilities and Expectations**

### **A. Policies Concerning Interim Ministry**

1. As soon as the Conference is aware of a pastor's resignation, a letter will be sent from the Conference Office to the governing body of the local church. Enclosures in the letter will include (1) information about interim ministry, (2) suggestions for concluding the current pastorate, and (3) guidelines for appointment of a search committee.
2. If an interim pastorate is desired, the Conference Minister will seek to present at least two names of potential interim pastor candidates to the governing body. Names from other sources which have been suggested to the local church will also be discussed at that time.
3. Names of candidates for interim pastorates will be selected from a list of persons who meet the criteria of the Conference placement office. Persons seeking to do intentional interim ministry will be required to have:
  - a. Education at a level equivalent to UCC ordination standards;
  - b. Standing as an authorized minister in a recognized denomination;
  - c. Appropriate credentials, including a ministerial profile or a resume with a current Criminal Background Check;
  - d. Loyalty to the United Church of Christ and a commitment to participate in the Association, the Conference, and the NHCUCC Interim Ministry Group during the interim period.
  - e. Commitment to work closely with both the lay leadership of the church and the Conference Minister;
  - f. Recent seminary graduates will not be considered for interim positions unless the Conference Minister chooses to make an exception because of special circumstance.

### **B. Characteristics of the Interim Pastor**

1. An Interim Pastor will have ability to:
  - plan Sunday morning corporate worship, preach, administer/celebrate the sacraments, conduct weddings and funerals;
  - engage in pastoral visitation, grief work, conflict resolution, listen to and discern the will of the community of faith;
  - administer skillfully in planning, budget and finance, day-to day operation of the church, and supervise staff;
  - deal successfully with start-up and closure;
  - assist the congregation to move through the five interim developmental tasks;
  - develop action plans quickly;
  - deal with dynamics of grief and relate compassionately with those who are grieving the loss of their former pastor and her/his family;
  - deal with conflict and assist in its resolution;
  - assess needs, analyze situations, and address problems to bring

- about solutions;
  - organize people and events;
  - identify potential resources for church development and work to improve standards of ministry.
2. The interim minister will possess a working knowledge of the UCC pastoral search process and the limits of his/her role in it, and the UCC guidelines for ministerial ethics. The interim minister may be involved and helpful to a search committee in terms of process, but not in terms of anything related to candidate selection.

### **C. Compensation Guidelines**

Churches are expected to follow the New Hampshire Conference Compensation Guidelines on the NHCUCC'S website at [www.nhcucc.org](http://www.nhcucc.org).

Reimbursement for travel should be equivalent to IRS guidelines. The interim pastor should submit a monthly voucher of total miles traveled. Because interim pastors often commute a long distance from home, this mileage may also be reimbursed.\*

*\*NOTE: The Internal Revenue Service considers employment which is expected to last a year or less to be "temporary employment," and persons in this category may be reimbursed for mileage to and from their primary residence at the IRS rate. Chapter 28, page 178, of the IRS Regulations states, in part: If your assignment or job away from your main place of work is temporary, your tax home does not change. You are considered to be away from home for the whole period and your travel expenses are deductible. Generally, a temporary assignment in a single location is one that is realistically expected to last (and does in fact last) for one year or less. Many tax advisors interpret this to mean that a straight mileage reimbursement for commuting interim pastors is reimbursable. If you have any question or concern, check with your tax advisor or your local IRS Office.*

### **D. Contractual Concerns**

1. The local church and the interim will determine if the contract is for a definite period of time or open-ended until the settled pastor arrives.
2. The local church and the interim will determine the conditions for terminating the contract.  
It is customary that the church or interim pastor may terminate the contract only after 60 days notice of such intent.

### **E. Guidelines Concerning Responsibilities and Expectations**

1. The interim pastor shall have sole responsibility for all pastoral and administrative functions of the position to which she/he has been called.
2. Usually, the local church and Association membership of the interim will not be transferred to the interim site.
3. The covenant between the local church and the interim will include a specific time when the covenant will be reviewed and/or renewed after the completion of one to six months of service, but not to preclude review and renegotiations at any mutually acceptable time.
4. The covenant will state that the interim pastor will not be a candidate for the permanent position, and this stipulation must be communicated to the whole

congregation. A breach of this promise may be grounds for an official review of ministerial fitness and /or may be considered as the interim seeks other positions in the New Hampshire Conference.

5. The interim pastor and the church should conduct an ongoing evaluation of the progress and success of the interim pastorate. This may be done by the diaconate, the pastoral relations committee, or another appropriate church committee.

#### **F. Additional Suggestions**

1. While the interim pastor may be helpful during the period of self study and profile development of the search process, she/he must be detached from the work of the search committee during the candidate selection process.
2. The interim pastor should help the congregation to reflect on its history and on its relations with previous pastors and to learn the lessons of those chapters in the story of the church. The purpose of this process is to promote appropriate grieving and healing and to enable the congregation to move ahead in its life, carrying with it memories which will uplift and/or inform the current and future life of the congregation.
3. The interim pastor may support the congregation in making organizational changes as they are needed and/or desired by the membership. This must be done only with the purpose of empowering the congregation in doing its own work rather than determining the future for the sake of action or motion.
4. While the interim period is often defined by the tasks to be achieved, it is also a time of spiritual exploration, celebration and renewal. The interim pastor can model the integration of the various aspects of the life of the church by lifting up the “business” of the church in worship.
5. The interim pastor is not to be present during interviews, events to introduce the candidate to the congregation, or at the Candidating Sunday.
6. An exit interview, helpful for both the church and the interim pastor, is part of the process and expectations of an interim pastorate. Some Association Committees on Church and Ministry are available to assist with this process.
7. The time between the call and the arrival of a settled pastor has tasks of both closure and preparation which are appropriate to it. This period can be planned by both the church and the interim pastor to be fruitful and to model successful transition and leave-taking.
8. The interim pastor must be able to move quickly into new situations, build working relationships and mutual support with a variety of people, and when the interim period is over, let go and move on, having dealt appropriately with personal issues of closure, be they grief or relief.
9. The interim pastor should model and encourage the covenantal relationship(s) between the local church and the denomination(s) and ecumenical bodies.
10. Because of the particular nature of interim ministry, it is inappropriate and not wise for the church’s associate pastor to serve as interim.
11. The interim pastor will not have any pastoral relationship with the congregation once the new pastorate is established, as provided in the **UCC Manual on Ministry**: “I will, upon termination and departure as pastor, sever my relationship with this congregation, recognizing that all future pastoral functions should be filled by my successor.

Segments of the above have been reprinted or adapted from:

Called Interim Ministry, Guideline for United Church of Christ Committees on the Ministry, Draft 6/14/99, p. 1.

Our Pastor is Leaving, A Guide for Church Leaders, published by the Ohio Conference United Church of Christ, Nov. 1996, p. 1.

Interim Ministry Manual, Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Interim Ministry Basic Education Workbook, Interim Ministry Network, P.O. Box 21251, Baltimore MD 21228-0751, 1995, Section 5, pp 22-27. ENGAGING AN INTERIM PASTOR

Ministry during the Interim Time: Working Guidelines for the United Church of Christ Committees on Ministry, Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Local Church Ministries. Third Draft, May 2003.

## COVENANT FOR INTERIM PASTORATES

### This a covenant between

\_\_\_\_\_ Church  
and \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Interim pastor

In keeping with the guidelines for ministry in the United Church of Christ, and with the guidelines described in "The Interim Ministry Handbook" of the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ, and in order to set forth clearly the agreement for Interim Pastoral Services, the parties covenant as follows:

1) \_\_\_\_\_ will begin ministry as Interim Pastor  
of \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.

2) The position is: \_\_\_\_\_ full time, understood to be approximately \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week.  
\_\_\_\_\_ part time, understood to be approximately \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week.

3) The Interim Pastor will be responsible to \_\_\_\_\_.  
Church Body

4) The Interim Pastor is the pastor of the church during the interim period and shall have sole responsibility for all pastoral and administrative functions of the position to which she/he has been called, and shall have the following responsibilities/duties:

- \_\_\_ Officiate at regular and special worship services of the church, including the administration of the sacraments
- \_\_\_ Provide pastoral services, and have first right of refusal, to officiate at weddings and funerals held at the church
- \_\_\_ Lead Christian Education programs to include \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Visit persons related to the church who are hospitalized or otherwise in need of pastoral services
- \_\_\_ Visit home bound members
- \_\_\_ Respond to pastoral emergencies such as severe illness, death, etc.
- \_\_\_ Participate in and provide pastoral consultation at church council, boards, and committee meetings
- \_\_\_ Guide and support the congregation in its work on the five interim developmental tasks:
  - a) Coming to Terms with the Congregation's History
  - b) Discovering a New Identity
  - c) Allowing Needed Leadership Change
  - d) Renewing Denominational Linkages, and
  - e) Committing to New Directions in Ministry
- \_\_\_ Participate with the church delegates in the Annual Meeting of the New

- Hampshire Conference, UCC, and meetings of the \_\_\_\_\_ Association
- \_\_\_ Participate in the programs and activities of the local Ministerial Association, the \_\_\_\_\_ Association, the New Hampshire Conference, including the Interim Ministers' Group, and \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Participate in evaluation of the Interim Pastorate at the conclusion of the Interim period.
- \_\_\_ Other duties:

In extending this call, the congregation understands that the Pastor will have freedom of the pulpit in matters of faith and ethics according to the dictates of the Word of God, the work of the Holy Spirit, the traditions of the United Church of Christ, and the realities of the world. (See Note\*)

- 5) The Church will support the Interim Pastor and will assume responsibility for:

- \_\_\_ Regular participation in worship services and meetings
- \_\_\_ Continuing financial support for the church and its mission and ministries
- \_\_\_ Encouragement and support of lay leadership
- \_\_\_ Self-study and engagement in a goal-setting process
- \_\_\_ Active Engagement in the five interim development tasks
- \_\_\_ Participation in Conference and Association meetings, programs and activities
- \_\_\_ Provision of a support and evaluation process for the Interim Pastor through the Diaconate or Pastoral Relations Committee
- \_\_\_ Participation in evaluation at the conclusion of the Interim Pastorate
- \_\_\_ Other:

- 6) The Church agrees to provide the following compensation and expense reimbursement to the Interim Pastor:

- \_\_\_ Base Salary of \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month
- \_\_\_ Housing Allowance of \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month or \_\_\_\_\_ use of parsonage (including utilities)
- \_\_\_ Annuity and Life Insurance and Disability Income Benefit Plan payments equal to 15.5% of the total of the Base Salary and Housing Allowance.
- \_\_\_ Social Security offset equal to 7.65% of the total of Base Salary and Housing Allowance
- \_\_\_ Health insurance for (# of people)\_\_\_\_\_ offered by the plan provided through, or designated by, the New Hampshire Conference, UCC
- \_\_\_ One week of paid vacation for every three months of service as Interim Pastor
- \_\_\_ Paid holidays are to include New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and the Friday after Thanksgiving, Christmas and one floating holiday. When any of these occur on a Sunday, another day should be taken as a "holy day."
- \_\_\_ Continuing Education leave equivalent to one day for each month of interim service.

\_\_\_ In addition, both the Church and the Interim Pastor agree to contribute 1% each of the total of Base Salary and Housing Allowance to the Interim Ministry Designated Health Fund administered by the New Hampshire Conference to assist Interim Pastors with health insurance costs during times when they are not serving a congregation.

\_\_\_ Travel reimbursement at \_\_\_\_\_ per mile at current IRS business rate for travel done on church business.

\_\_\_ Including travel from residence to church and return.

\_\_\_ Reimbursement for other expenses incurred in the performance of the interim ministry.

\_\_\_ Reimbursement for the expense of the required criminal background check.

7) This covenant is based on mutual trust and good faith of the parties to it. It will be reviewed and revised as needed after \_\_\_\_\_ months of service and after every \_\_\_\_\_ months of service thereafter, and may be modified by mutual consent of both parties. It will remain in effect until \_\_\_\_\_, or until it is terminated.

8) Either the Church or the Interim Pastor may terminate the covenant relationship upon \_\_\_\_\_ (suggest 60) day notice.

9) The Interim Pastor agrees that his/her name will not be submitted as a candidate for the position of called pastor; the Church also agrees that the Interim Pastor will not be considered. The Interim Pastor and the Church agree that this stipulation will be communicated to the whole congregation.

10) The Church and the Interim Pastor will provide copies of this covenant to the following:

- a) The Church
- b) The Interim Pastor
- c) The Association Committee on Church and Ministry
- d) The Conference Registrar and Conference Minister

We accept the terms of this covenant.

For the Church	Office held	Date
Interim Pastor		Date

\*From "Our Church Seeks a Pastor," pg. 33, published by New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ.

*Covenant form approved by NH Conference, UCC, Interim Ministers Group and the Conference Minister 01/27/2011.*