

PRESBYTERY OF NEW COVENANT INTERIM PASTOR PACKET

Included in this packet: Why Choose an Interim?

**IPNC Guidelines for the Presbytery of New Covenant
Calling an Interim Pastor Checklist
Sample Interim Pastor Position Description**

What is an Interim Pastor?

An Interim is a Temporary Pastoral Relationship, hired by the session for a fixed period of time, to lead a church during the transition between installed pastors. An interim is **not** an installed position.

From the Book of Order, G-2.0504b: Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation. When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of a teaching elder, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place. Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. A teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.

Why Choose an Interim?

Many sessions decide on an interim pastor to guide the congregation during the period between installed pastors. The most effective interim pastors have had extensive special training for this unique ministry. Some interim pastors serve full-time and others serve part-time depending upon the needs of the church. The character and grace of this interim period will have an impact on the congregation's future with its next installed pastor. This transition is an important period in the life of the congregation. It is not just "in-between time," but a valuable period in-and-of itself. The purpose of the interim pastor is to guide the congregation through five major tasks:

1. Come to Terms with History through Conversation and Healing

- Celebrate what God has been doing and is doing in this congregation.
- Recognize wounds, scars that need to be healed.
- Be able to leave the past and move into the future.

2. Discover the Church's Identity

- How do we see ourselves?
- How does our community see us?
- What gives the church its identity?
- What are the unique gifts God has given to this congregation?

3. Empower Leadership of the Congregation

- Where are the centers of power in the congregation? (Note: power here is considered in positive terms: Who has been raised up by God to provide leadership for us?)
- What changes in power are taking place? Who is letting go of previous leadership responsibilities? What new persons are beginning to take leadership roles?
- Who needs to be challenged to take additional responsibilities?

4. Affirm the Connectional Linkage as a Presbyterian Church

- What are the strengths of our Presbyterian connectional system?
- How are we helped in our mission by the Presbytery, Synod and/or General Assembly?
- How can we further build on the strengths and assets afforded us by our connectional system?

5. Make New Commitments to the Future and New Leadership

- Do we have any unexamined expectations of the new pastor?
- How will the new pastor be welcomed?
- Saying goodbye to the interim period and moving with enthusiasm into the new future.

Possible Activities during the Interim Period

Every congregation is different. A congregation is different at different times. The interim experience at one time will not be the same at another time. A session and the Interim Pastor Search Committee will want to spend some time in thinking through the congregation's particular needs at this specific time. What have some congregations experienced during the interim period? Below is a "laundry list" to consider. Some will apply to your situation, others will not. Use this list to reflect on your particular congregation:

- Leadership in the congregation's re-visioning process.
- Conflict resolution within the congregation.
- Exploration of new programmatic possibilities.
- Reorganization of session and training of officers.
- Guidance about staffing concerns.
- Examination and possible revision of by-laws, procedures, policies, and structural organization to be in line with the church's mission.
- Possible ritual of closure with previous pastor, if not already done.
- Express emotions, heal hurts, completion of grief work.
- Renew faith; discover strengths.
- Maintain regular contact with the COM and presbytery staff with regular reports.
- Updating of records.
- Implementation of changes already determined by the congregation.
- Practice new ways of communicating and making decisions.
- Reducing level of anxiety and fear of the unknown in the congregation.
- Attention to stewardship and financial matters. How is giving in the congregation? Address issues of endowments, memorial policies. How is financial statement related to the church's mission statement? When was the last audit? What are the procedures for handling money?
- Renewing the spiritual life of the congregation.

PRESBYTERY OF NEW COVENANT GUIDELINES FOR CALLING AN INTERIM PASTOR and ROLE OF THE INTERIM PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE (IPNC)

When the congregation has voted to dissolve the pastoral relationship, an interim search can begin. Please note that the departing pastor shall have no involvement in the process of selecting an interim pastor.

Forming the Committee

The session will request approval from COM to form an IPNC, and a Transition Team will be assigned. The COM is represented by the Transition Team, whose members are appointed by the COM. The Transition Team will provide guidance through two liaisons to the IPNC throughout the process of the interim pastor search. The Transition Team usually consists of a Ruling Elder and a Teaching Elder, who will serve as the Moderator of the Session during the transition period.

The session may appoint an Interim Pastor Nominating Committee (3-5 members). The committee may be composed of session members and congregation members. Ideally, the IPNC reflects the diversity of the congregation.

Once formed, the committee should elect officers; an IPNC Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. Regular IPNC meetings shall be scheduled.

The IPNC is tasked with writing an Interim Position Description (IPD). This is a description of the position, and includes expectations and responsibilities. Alternatively, the IPNC may choose to develop a Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP - formerly called a Ministry Information Form or MIF). If the IPNC chooses to create and upload an MDP, it is recommended to become familiar with the [Church Leadership Connection](#) (CLC) platform. There is an introductory video that explains the process on the home page of the CLC website. The session and IPNC may be encouraged to do a Mission Study ahead of writing the Interim Position Description or the MDP. If submitting an MDP to the CLC, the Clerk of Session will be invited to create a profile on CLC and submit the completed MDP.

The IPD or the MDP must be submitted the COM for approval. Once approved by COM, “the way becomes clear” to begin the search. If using an MDP, it gets loaded onto the CLC platform for publication.

Advertising the Position

The Presbytery staff will publish the position in the *Tuesday Connect* and circulate the position description within the presbytery. Interested applicants may submit their Personal Discernment Profiles (PDP, formerly the Personal Information Form or PIF). The committee is also invited to publicize the position through other means and publications.

Screening candidates

Take time to consider how the committee will organize themselves to receive, distribute, track and evaluate candidates. Assure fairness for EEO/AA in ranking, screening and selecting process. Establish ranking, screening, and selection criteria based on the requirements set out in the IDP/MDP. Review each one thoroughly, comparing the PDP with your expectations:

- Does the minister have the years of experience you are seeking?
- Do they exhibit skills that you need? Do the pastoral activities ratings match yours?

- Do they have previous experience as an interim pastor?

Make clear "yes" and "no" decisions about which ministers you'd like to consider more closely. Avoid trying to maintain a "maybe" list.

Interviewing Promising Candidates

Our presbytery has instituted a 2-step process for IPNC contacts with prospective candidates after much trial-and-error. This process has worked the best for all our churches and their potential pastors, and saved churches and pastors much heartache:

Casual Contact - Allows non face-to-face contacts (telephone, e-mails, mail, etc.) and exploratory face-to-face contacts for the exchange of information without any commitments

Serious Contact - Only after approval of the candidate by COM may the IPNC have in-person meeting and interview with a candidate that could directly lead to discussion of specific terms of call for pastor position

Casual Contact (Information exchange with no commitment)

- Contact the candidate to determine if they are indeed interested in your position (for candidates whose PDP you received through the matching process) or continued interest (for self-referrals).
- Discuss availability
- Request audio/video of sermons.
- Refer candidate to your church website
- Consider sending packets about your church (bulletins, newsletters, brochures, etc.) to candidate if that information is not available on the church website.
- Have a phone or online interview with all or most of the IPNC. Discuss both PDP and IPD/MDP to secure a 2-way dialogue on the needs and desires of both parties.
- Have no more than three members of IPNC hear candidate preach (without contact).

Serious Contact –Requiring Clearance by COM

The IPNC chair shall contact the Executive Presbyter and the Coordinator for COM for approval and clearance check *before* any of the following:

- In-person interview by all or most of the IPNC
- Discuss the candidate's status in the search
- Negotiate specific terms of call for pastor ([see Minimum Terms of Compensation](#) and [Terms of Compensation Worksheet](#))

Reference Checks

After the IPNC determines that the minister is interested in the position, contact the references listed in the PDP. Prepare questions in advance, reviewing them with the COM, questions should focus on the ability of the candidate to do effective ministry and not be unnecessarily intrusive.

Executive Presbyters, Stated Clerks and COM chairs that are not listed as primary references may be contacted. Secondary References are persons who are not listed by the candidate but are suggested by others because they are thought to have knowledge of the candidate. They should only be contacted when

the candidate has given permission.

In addition, the Stated Clerk and General Presbyter of New Covenant will be contacting the candidate's previous presbytery (if they have one) to check references and background and will inform the IPNC if any issues are raised.

**Under no circumstances should a PNC contact members of a pastor's present congregation without her or his permission to do so.*

Helpful TIP: Reference Questions should address the following areas:

- Is this person a member in good standing in the Presbytery?
- Is there anything in this person's background that rises concerns about his/her suitability for ministry? Are there any "red flags"?
- Offer a brief description of the position/church, Do you think this person has abilities that would be suitable for such a call?
- Would you describe this person as a "visionary" leader? Or a "maintenance" pastor?
- What type of reputation does this person have within the Presbytery?

Narrowing the Field

The IPNC does its own evaluation following reference checks and a possible brief phone call to a candidate for clarification. The IPNC selects a short list (not to exceed five names) of ministers with whom they desire to interview personally and possibly issue a call. Names, along with the candidate's PDPs, are submitted to the Committee on Ministry for approval before face-to-face interviews can take place.

Conducting the Interview

The PDP is designed to introduce ministers and IPNCs and help them begin to get acquainted. In order for an IPNC to evaluate a person fully, it is necessary to meet the person face-to-face, engage in conversation, and ideally, participate in worship with the minister at a neutral pulpit. Contact the presbytery to arrange for a neutral pulpit.

- Check with liaison to be sure the candidate has been approved for the interview
- Plan your interview time carefully so you use it to good advantage.
- Decide the setting so that all are comfortable.
- Decide who on the committee should begin the time with a brief statement about the congregation and your understanding of the needs during the interim period.
- Frame your questions in advance and decide who should/will ask each question. (Hint: since any question will be asked with a particular emphasis, try to keep this consistent through the various interviews.)
- Allow adequate opportunity for the candidate to ask questions.
- Determine questions to ask in order to evaluate candidate.
Some questions you may wish to ask:
Tell us about your faith journey.
What are the things you feel best about in your last ministry? What have been the challenges there?

What interests you about this position?
What do you bring to our ministry?
What are your greatest strengths in ministry? Your greatest weaknesses?
Describe a typical week in your ministry.
Share your perspective on the Presbyterian Church (USA).
If we select you as our interim pastor, when could you start and what would be your start-up plan?
How do you balance your personal/family life with your ministry?
What will you need from us, the members of this church, in order to be effective as our interim pastor?
What questions or concerns do you have?

You will also want to develop questions related to the specific candidate. These will come out of things you read the PDP and things you hear from references.

- Come to a consensus as a committee so that clarity and harmony are conveyed.
- Take notes, not only of the information, but of impressions gained during the interview.
- Come to a consensus with the candidate as to what the next step is.

After the Interview

A full committee review should be held as soon as possible after the interview.

If several interviews are conducted, the PNC should rank candidates. Keep candidates informed regarding their status.

The Process of Call

The IPNC should strive to make its decision both unanimous and enthusiastic. Experience has shown that where there is a serious division in a committee regarding a candidate, the same division may appear in the congregation. Bear in mind that each member's integrity and individuality is to be respected and that any reservations he or she has about the candidate selected should be brought to the committee's attention and discussed with candor.

Extending the Call

When the IPNC has reached a final decision and has conferred with the COM liaison about its choice, the IPNC chair or Clerk of Session should contact the selected candidate and extend the call. Although you will be eager to get an affirmative response from the chosen person, she or he may want some time to respond. Except for unusual circumstances, two weeks should be sufficient time in which to expect a response.

Negotiating the Terms of Call

The IPNC is not authorized to negotiate beyond the total amount allotted by the session. If there is a need to do so, session approval must be obtained. Presbytery of New Covenant has established minimum Terms of Call. **Session approval is required for extending the call and for the terms of call.** Keep in mind that an interim pastor is a temporary pastoral relationship, and interim contracts are limited by the Book of Order to one year, but can be renewed annually through mutual agreement of the pastor, session, and COM. Interim contracts can be made for less than a year, and also include a 30 day release clause which can be initiated by pastor, session, or COM.

Interim pastors are not eligible to accept a permanent installed call at the church where they serve as interim. The congregation does **not** vote to approve the contract or the call.

Examination of the Nominee by COM*

As a third partner in the call, the presbytery, through the COM Examinations Committee, must examine each minister or candidate who seeks membership on his or her Christian faith and views on theology, sacraments, and worship, the bible and polity. Candidates called by a IPNC must submit all required paperwork (as set forth in the letter to the candidate) to the presbytery office with sufficient time for the committee to review.

The COM Coordinator in the presbytery office will work with the nominee in establishing a time for the nominee to be examined by the COM's Examinations Subcommittee.

NOTE: Pastors in New Presbytery Covenant, who receive a call within the presbytery, do **not have to be reexamined.*

Once a Contract is Accepted

When a contract is extended to an interim pastor (and approved by COM), that individual shall be named the Moderator of the Session.

Signed contracts should be submitted to the presbytery office via the Coordinator for COM/CPM.

There is **NO** service of installation conducted by presbytery through an Administrative Commission.

The IPNC is dissolved.

CALLING AN INTERIM PASTOR CHECKLIST

1. Once a Call is dissolved by the congregation, Clerk of Session should notify COM, request an appointed Transition Team and permission to form an IPNC
2. Session appoints an Interim Pastor Search Committee from among its membership (3-5 members representing the diversity of the congregation).
3. The IPNC prepares an Interim Position Description (IDP) or a Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP), which includes a description of duties and terms of employment.
4. COM approves the IDP or MDP.
5. Advertise position, review and receive PDP matches and referrals.
6. Request serious contact approval from presbytery
7. Schedule and Conduct interviews
8. Request from presbytery any reference and background checks.
9. Select a Nominee
10. Extend a Call.
11. Negotiate terms of Call.
12. Approval of the candidate and Terms of Call by session
13. Approval of terms of Call by COM
14. Candidate meets with COE (if necessary)
15. COM sustains the examination (if necessary)
16. Sign the call. (IPNC and COM)
17. IPNC is dismissed

A Sample Position Description for an Interim Pastor Position

Interim Pastor Purpose: To provide spiritual leadership, pastoral care, administrative oversight, and organizational direction to the church with a broad program of worship, teaching, outreach, and fellowship: emphasis on worship, leadership, preaching, teaching and stewardship.

Accountability: To the session and the presbytery.

Responsibilities: Help the congregation address the 5 tasks of an interim:

- Come to Terms with History through Conversation and Healing
- Discover the Church's Identity
- Empower Leadership of the Congregation
- Affirm the Connectional Linkage as a Presbyterian Church
- Make New Commitments to the Future and New Leadership

Duties and Expectations:

Be head of staff, leading, directing, and supervising the pastoral, program and support staff.

Preach, lead worship, administer the sacraments, and provide a teaching ministry which will encourage the spiritual growth of the membership and their outreach to the community in evangelism and mission.

Provide active leadership and encouragement to the session, the congregation, and its organizations in articulating vision and developing programs reflective of our calling to be a renewed community in Christ and faithful followers of Christ.

Oversee, encourage and support the ministries of the Personnel, Worship and Stewardship Commissions, the Nominating Committee, and their ministry teams as well as other task forces and committees as necessary.

Provide leadership and resourcing in the area of organizational development and management of staff.

Moderate session.

Strengthen and build member faithfulness as Christian stewards.

Mentor others spiritually.

Share in a ministry of compassion, comfort, and hope in hospital calling, crisis counseling, home visitation, funerals and weddings.

Participate in the work and ministry of governing bodies beyond the session, ecumenical groups, and the life of the community as a representative of the congregation.

Plan for and participate yearly in educational programs for personal and professional development in consultation with the Personnel Committee.

Relationships:

Relates to the staff as head of staff, the session as moderator, the members as pastor, commissions and committees as ex-officio member and servant leader, and the presbytery as a continuing member.

Evaluation:

Performance review will be conducted annually by the Personnel Committee, who will review the adequacy of compensation annually at a separate time.