

GUIDELINES FOR  
INTERIM PASTORS IN THE PRESBYTERY OF ARKANSAS

1. An interim pastor need not belong to the Presbytery of Arkansas, but attendance at presbytery meetings is encouraged.
2. Ordinarily an interim pastor in the Presbytery of Arkansas shall have either had interim training level I or write into his or her contract a design for continuing education that shall address the needs of the congregation that she or he is serving. This design shall be developed in consultation with the Committee on Ministry and/or the General Presbyter.
3. An interim shall submit to the COM, the General Presbyter, and the session of the church that she or he serves quarterly reports on his or her work, the state of the church, and progress toward the developmental tasks mentioned in the quarterly reports.
4. The COM shall provide an outline for such reports and sample contracts to the session of any church seeking an interim. Such contract shall include provisions for ending the contract and a reasonable severance agreement.
5. The COM shall provide for the interim an assessment of the situation in the church to which the interim has been called at the time of the interview when the interim ministry is considered for approval.
6. An interim pastor should expect to meet with other interim pastors within the presbytery at least annually.
7. The COM and/or the General Presbyter shall hold an exit interview with the interim pastor.

## How to Interview an Interim Pastor

### PREPARATION FOR AN INTERVIEW

#### *Information to have on hand*

1. General Information about the congregation: size, number and type of staff, worship times, Church School size, class, curriculum
2. About the need for an interim pastor: why the former pastor left, any unusual circumstances surrounding that leaving (retirement after a long tenure, misconduct, congregational dissent, death, divorce)
3. The Salary Package of the former pastor--trained, experienced interims should receive at least this package
4. The current budget of the congregation
5. The most recent annual report to the congregation
6. Any materials used in evangelism that describe the congregation
7. Information about housing for the interim pastor

#### *Prepare before the interview*

The goals of the Session for the interim period:

1. For how long? Is this short term, a regular transition time, or long term because of special situations?
2. Particular situations that need to be resolved during the transition time: e.g., grief issues about former pastor, unfinished projects, staff concerns, stabilizing efforts, helping congregation cope with change
4. Your relationship with the presbytery

#### *Know what a trained interim pastor expects to do*

1. Be with the congregation until the next pastor is identified
2. Be the moderator of the Session if presbytery concurs
3. Officiate at all weddings, baptisms, funerals
4. Provide the usual services: worship, visits, administration, committee work, teaching, counseling
5. Be a part of the larger church: presbytery, synod, General Assembly
6. Work with Session to manage the transition period
7. Not be a candidate for the installed position
8. Work with staff, clarify relationships, job descriptions
9. Prepare the congregation for the ministry of the next pastor
10. Have no relationship to the search process.
11. Receive adequate compensation, vacation, study leave
12. Insist on proper updating of the manse for new pastor if the church has a manse
13. Follow Book of Order procedures about the return of any former pastor

### A Bit of Wisdom

Interviewing and choosing an interim is a less intense process than searching for a new pastor. Interim pastors have a very short time frame to hunt for the next position--if you cannot work quickly and decide quickly you will lose good candidates.

### *Sample Interview Questions*

What is your training for interim ministry? (The minimum is 2 weeks or 60 contact hours of basic interim ministry training. In not finished, the person should be in the process of completing this training.)

Why do you enjoy interim ministry?

How do you, and your family, deal with the constant reallocations in interim ministry?

Tell us about your experience and the various types of congregation you have served.

How do you deal with former pastors of the congregation you are serving?

How do you feel about not being able to be the next installed pastor?

What relationship with the presbytery do you have as an interim pastor?

Are there any family considerations that we should know about?

Are there events on your personal calendar that we will need to adjust for during the coming year? (Interim ministers have kids that graduate, marry, class reunions, weddings for friends, meetings already scheduled.)

What are your general goals for the interim period in any congregation?

How do you propose we evaluate the interim period you will serve?

Is there anything that might cause you to leave before the installed pastor is identified?

Have you ever lived in a \_\_\_\_\_ setting? (Use rural, urban, etc., as describes your congregation's area.)

Specific questions that you may have relevant to the congregation and its needs that the interim may be working with.

### *A Bit of Wisdom*

A person who is a contrast to the recent pastor will provide the congregation with a new set of images and understandings of ministry, which is valuable for the search process for the installed pastor.