



PRESBYTERY OF THE
CASCADES



Presbytery of the Cascades
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Moving Through the Interim Pastor Selection Process

Revised: August 2023

A Word of Introduction

Finding an Interim Pastor

On the surface it may look like finding an interim pastor is the same as securing a new called and installed pastor (or associate pastor) for your congregation.

It may look the same, but it is not. Below are some significant differences:

1. The interim pastor position is different.
 - The person is not called by a vote of the congregation but hired by the session.
 - Although the Cascades Presbytery's Commission on Ministry (COM) is deeply involved, there is no service of installation conducted by presbytery through an Administrative Commission.
2. The interim pastor selection process is different.
 - Often, when the scope of the search is more limited, rather than developing a Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP - formerly called a Ministry Information Form or MIF), the session selects a special committee to develop an interim position description.
 - After recommendations from the regional COM, the position description is approved by session and "the way becomes clear" to begin the search.
 - The Presbytery staff will publish the position description on the Presbytery website and circulate the position description within the presbytery. Interested applicants may submit their Personal Discernment Profiles (PDP, formerly the Personal Information Form or PIF) must be verified by the presbytery to ensure their eligibility and their good standing in a presbytery or compatible denomination.
 - If the session wishes to do a wider search for the interim pastor, the search team may draft a Ministry Discernment Profile, which needs to be approved by the Session and the regional COM to be posted on the PC(USA) Church Leadership Connection website. The COM liaison and Presbyter can assist with this process. The session is also invited to publicize the position through other means and publications.

The Outcome

Your experience of reading PDPs, listening to candidates preach, and engaging with them during an interview will uncover the right interim pastor for your congregation and situation.

What is an Interim Pastor?

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.

What Can an Interim Do for You?

Many sessions decide for an interim pastor to guide the congregation during the period between installed and called 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 enormous impact on the congregation's future with its next called and 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.

The interim pastor may remain as long as necessary for a healthy transition to occur within the life of the congregation. The interim pastor is not eligible to become the next called and installed pastor.

- An interim pastor is your pastor, carrying on the ministry of the church with you while you search for an installed pastor.
- An interim pastor helps you deal with all the feelings that accompany the departure of a pastor - grief, anger, relief, confusion, anxiety.
- An interim pastor helps you think about your church and its ministry in the past, present and future.
- An interim pastor can help your church deal with problems before a new minister is called.
- An interim pastor helps you prepare for a new minister.

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.
- Vent 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.

The Steps Toward an Interim Pastor

1. Session appoints an Interim Pastor Search Committee from among its membership.
2. This group prepares an interim pastor position description which includes a description of duties and terms of employment. A sample interim pastor position description follows this section. The session’s approval of this material moves the process to the third step in the search.
3. Presbytery Staff will assist in publicizing the position and confirming the eligibility of applicants. The search committee reviews, interviews and presents a nominee to session. (Sample covenant is found on pages 9-10.) Once the search committee identifies one or two candidates as finalists, they will notify the Advocate for Congregations and Clergy who will conduct the presbytery reference check and mandated criminal background check (note: this is only for a teaching elder not currently a member of Cascades Presbytery).

4. Session invites, candidate accepts, and the presbytery COM approves. The congregation does not vote on an interim pastor.
5. 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.

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:

1. Help the congregation address the 5 tasks of a time of 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; and Make New Commitments to the Future and New Leadership.
2. Be head of staff, leading, directing, and supervising the pastoral, program and support staff.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Provide leadership and resourcing in the area of organizational development and management of staff.
7. Moderate session.

8. Strengthen and build member faithfulness as Christian stewards.
9. Mentor others spiritually.
10. Share in a ministry of compassion, comfort, and hope in hospital calling, crisis counseling, home visitation, funerals and weddings.
11. 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.
12. 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 Commission, who will review the adequacy of compensation annually at a separate time.

The Interview Process

Names will be given to the session by the Advocate for Congregations and Clergy in consultation with the regional Commission on Ministry.

Getting Ready 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.

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?
- One of our goals is to strengthen our _____.
How would you envision doing that?
- Describe a typical week in your ministry.
- Share your perspective on the Presbyterian Church (USA).
- One of the issues our session has debated in the past few years is _____.
Tell us how you might address that topic.
- If we select you as our interim pastor (or other role), 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 in the PDP and things you hear from references. Is there anything else you need to know that will impact this person's performance of ministry?



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INTERIM PASTOR COVENANT TEMPLATE

The following covenant between the session of **Church Name/City/State** and the Rev. **Pastor's Name** is for the purpose of defining the terms of the **Interim or Interim Associate Pastor Position**.

The Interim Pastor (check the appropriate response):

- Will become Is a member of the Presbytery of the Cascades.
- Will Will not serve as moderator of session.
- Will Will not serve as head of staff.

The Position Description for this position is attached to this covenant. The Position Description shall include the Five Tasks of an Interim Pastor: **1.** Come to Terms with History through Conversation and Healing; **2.** Discover the Church's Identity; **3.** Empower Leadership of the Congregation; **4.** Affirm the Connectional Linkage as a Presbyterian Church; and **5.** Make New Commitments to the Future and New Leadership.

Please list key goals for this interim period:

1.

During the length of the agreement, The Rev. **Pastor's Name** _____ will be accountable to the Presbytery through quarterly reports to the COM. At the end of the covenant, **Congregation Name Here** _____ Presbyterian church agrees to provide a performance review.

It is understood that **The Rev. Pastor's Name** _____ has agreed not to be involved in any way with the Pastor Nominating Committee, except that trained Interim Pastors, in consultation with COM, may lead the congregation's ministry discernment study. The Interim Pastor will see that the PNC makes adequate reports. The Interim Pastor will not assist in preparation of the MDP.

It is understood that The Rev. **Pastor's Name** _____ cannot be a candidate for the vacant pastoral office of **Congregation Name Here** _____ Presbyterian Church, and in every way will seek to prepare the way for the coming of an installed pastor.

This covenant is for a period of up to **# of Months** Months (not more than 12, G-2.0504b) beginning **Start Date Here**. This covenant may be terminated by the session upon 30 days written notice. The Interim Pastor may terminate the covenant with 30 days written notice and a forfeiture of any payment beyond the 30 day period. This agreement may be extended with approval of the COM.

Terms:

The Interim Pastor is employed on a full-time part time (50%, 75%, etc.) basis, serving approximately # of hours hours per week, and will be compensated for interim pastoral services as follows (please pro-rate as necessary depending on part-time basis.)

Salary	\$	Housing	\$
Utilities	\$	Social Security Allowance	\$
Professional Expense	\$	Vacation	Four Weeks
Continuing Education	\$	Study Leave	Two Weeks
Other	\$	Other	\$
Full pension, medical, disability and death coverage under the Board of Pensions.			
Attendance at the <input type="checkbox"/> Spring <input type="checkbox"/> Fall presbytery Discovery Retreat.			

Board of Pensions (check which apply): Medical Retirement

Signatures (Either digital or written signature is acceptable):

_____ **Interim Pastor**

_____ **Clerk of Session**

Date of Session Action: *Click or tap to enter a date.*

Approved by Commission on Ministry:

Region: _____

Date: *Click or tap to enter a date.*

Please email completed form to: office@potc.life

Useful web links:

Presbyterian Church (USA):

www.pcusa.org

Presbytery of the Cascades

www.cascadespresbytery.org

Presbytery of the Cascades: Commission on Ministry Resources:

<https://www.cascadespresbytery.org/commission-on-ministry/>

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