

THE THREE STAGES OF THE INTENTIONAL INTERIM PROCESS

Dr. Peter Hogeterp, Belle River, Ontario

An Overview

The Intentional Interim Process is designed to help a church move intentionally from the ministry of the previous pastor to the ministry of the following pastor. The Interim Process technically begins with the Farewell Service of the previous pastor, and, ideally, ends with the Installation of the next pastor. There are three stages in the Interim Process: a) the self-study phase; b) the direction-finding phase; and c) the commitment to a new direction, ending with the searching and calling of the next pastor. The first phase lasts 2-3 months, the second 2-4 months and the third, 2-4 months. Another way of stating these phases is to say that we will look at the PAST, the PRESENT, and the FUTURE.

PHASE ONE: Self Study

In this stage, the congregation asks itself the who, where, how, what, why questions.

- 1) Identity: Who are we? How has God been shaping our identity throughout our history? How did the church begin? What are some of the key events in our communal life? What shaped our identity as compared to the identity of the other area CRCs? We will identify a process at getting at our identity.
- 2) Context: Where are we? What is the community like in which God has located us? How has this church's history either followed or not followed the patterns of demographic growth in the city?
- 3) Process: what are the underlying dynamics that knit this congregation together in its communal life? How are decisions made? How is leadership exercised? What is the communication flow in the congregation?
- 4) Program: What are we about? What do we do? How does the congregation minister to its own members, to its community, to the world? When do people get together? For what?
- 5) Mission: Why are we here? What unique place does God have for us to fill? What can we do better than others? What segment of the population are we most effective in reaching? This step will lead automatically to the next stage.

Phase Two: Direction Finding

In this stage the congregation asks where will it go from here. The Interim Minister will help the church:

- 1) Grieve the loss of the previous pastor(s) and deal with any of the issues that have remained unresolved from previous ministries.
- 2) Celebrate its past. The church will celebrate its history and understand its unique place in God's greater plan for His church in their community.
- 3) Celebrate the present. The Interim Pastor will help the church discover its unique characteristics, its particular strengths, its gifted membership, and its value to God. The church will also discover its growth areas, where it needs to do some hard work in making improvements.
- 4) Identify a vision, clarify its mission and set goals. The church will, in the above process, begin to understand what God has in mind for the church's future. The church will set short-term attainable goals, and watch God work His purposes in them. Inasmuch as nearly the entire congregation has been involved in this process to this point, there is a tremendous spirit of unity and excitement about what God may have in store for the church.
- 5) Identify those who are able and willing to give leadership to the church's new vision. The Interim Minister will assist in mentoring new leaders, training leaders, motivating the congregation, and praising God for His mighty presence in the church.
- 6) Provide healthy conflict resolution for any issues this new direction may be creating among the leadership and membership of the church. The Interim Minister will also help the church develop healthy conflict resolution strategies.
- 7) Identify what kind of new pastoral leadership they will need to take them into the new future. The Interim Minister will not be available to be that new pastor, but he will help the church develop a list of potential candidates and help the church make good linkages and provide good communication patterns.

PHASE THREE: New Identity

Once the church is clear about its new identity, and its vision for the future, a new mission statement and future goals are clearly articulated; it can, then, begin to search out a new pastor.

The Interim Minister will help the church:

- 1) Identify the theological position of the new pastor, with a clear understanding of how he/she understands the Bible, his/her respect for the Reformed Creeds, his/her admiration for the history and traditions of this congregation, and his/her personal spiritual commitment to the Lord and his/her calling.
- 2) Identify the characteristics and personality traits they need in their new pastor. Where the church is heading will determine to a great degree what kind of pastor it's going to take to get the church there.
- 3) The church will have committed itself to the new vision, mission statement and goals. Local leadership will be in place to take the church there. The church is aware of the kind of pastor needed at this particular time in its history .

Search and Installation of the new Pastor

The Interim Minister will coach the church on the selection process but not determine its outcome. He will give advice on the interviewing process but not be involved in the interviews themselves. The Interim Minister's tasks are completed when the new Pastor accepts the call and is officially installed. He will not be involved in any negotiations between the new Pastor and the church as to contract, tasks, etc.

THE TASKS OF THE TRANSITION PASTOR

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The Transition Pastor will be involved in the following tasks:

- 1) He will clearly identify the Transition Process and monitor its progress throughout the Transition Period so that it is a fruitful and intentional one).
- 2) He will conduct worship in a way that is meaningful and inspiring for the congregation, preferably working with a Worship Planning Team and the musicians.
- 3) He will provide pastoral care for the congregation during the Transition, including hospital visitation, doing weddings and funerals, and such other as the Council requests.
- 4) He will assist Council in helping the church work through its grief with the departure of the previous pastor(s).
- 5) He will assist the church in dealing with power and conflict issues, introducing a conflict resolution strategy if there is not already one in place.
- 6) He will assist the congregation in evaluating its history, working with a Transition Steering Committee appointed by Council and representative of the congregation.
- 7) He will provide administrative oversight of the functioning of the church, jointly with the Council.
- 8) He will assist the congregation in performing the specific tasks required to make the Transition Process a healthy, intentional one, e.g., identifying vision, mission and goals, managing conflict, etc.
- 9) He will submit to quarterly reviews of both his own work and the church's progress in going through the Transition Process. This regular review will help keep the Process on track.
- 10) He will help the church determine the type of pastoral leadership it will require to take it into its future. He will guide the process that identifies the person and brings the church to its final selection, including learning how to interview potential pastors.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Birth and Early Education: born in the Netherlands as the son of parents who immigrated to Canada in 1947, settling in the Hamilton, Ontario area. Had all my schooling in public schools in Ontario, graduating from Simcoe District High School in 1960.

College and Seminary: graduated from Calvin College in 1963, from Calvin Seminary in 1966. I received my D.Min. degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, in 2000, with a thesis on: How To Develop Lay Pastoral Care Ministry In The Local Church.

Ordination and Churches: Served: Ordained in 1966 in Peers, Alberta; served Rudyard Michigan 1970-1973; Ambassador, Windsor, Ontario 1973-1988; on pastoral staff at First CRC London, 1988-2000; on staff as Pastor of Congregational Care, Georgetown CRC, Hudsonville, Michigan, 2000-2005; Transition Pastor for First CRC, Chatham, 2005-2008.

Specialized Training: "Master Planning Consultant" with Christian Reformed Home Missions; "Focusing Leaders" with CRHM; "Conflict Resolution Strategist" with the Lombard Mennonite Peace Institute (Lombard, IL); "Specialized Interim Training" with the Interim Ministry Network (Pittsburgh, PA) under the auspices of the CRC Pastor-Church Relations Committee.

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