

Presbytery of Philadelphia
Commission on Congregations & Leadership
Selection and Expectations of the Interim Pastor
(Revised June 2013)

A. Determining Pastoral Leadership Options

When an installed teaching elder (pastor) leaves a congregation, the session in coordination with the Commission on Congregations and Leadership (CCL) liaison, discusses options for ongoing pastoral leadership. For immediate Sunday pastoral services, a Pulpit Supply List is available by calling the Presbytery Office at 215-242-1400.

There may be circumstances that lead the session to seek specialized transitional leadership. In such cases it may be appropriate to work with the CCL to identify and approve a temporary supply pastor, full or part time, to address such issues before continuing a process to call a new pastor. Such contracts would be established for a period of up to one year and may be renewed at the request of the session and approval of CCL.

If a full time interim pastor is to be hired by the session, the CCL liaison works with the session during the selection process.

B. Position Description

The session, through its personnel committee or an interim pastor search committee appointed by the session, writes an Interim Pastor Position Description. Position description examples may be provided by the CCL liaison. When completed the position description is first approved by the session then sent to the CCL for review and approval. When all approvals are received, the interim pastor search committee may now begin its work.

C. Selection and Hiring

Basic interim pastor requirements of the Presbytery of Philadelphia:

1. Membership in the Presbytery of Philadelphia
2. Completion of Phase I of Interim Ministry Training
3. Working knowledge of the Five Developmental Tasks of the congregation during the interim period
4. Commitment to serve as a catalyst for change not a chaplain of the past
5. Participation in the presbytery's monthly Interim Pastor Collegium
6. Submission of a quarterly report to the CCL liaison
7. Agreement that he/she will not be eligible as a candidate for the installed position of the congregation being served
8. Completion of an Exit Interview with CCL and the Covenant of Closure

Interim Pastor Personal Information Forms (PIFs):

1. Self-Referral: Before serious consideration will be given to a self-referred PIF, the interim pastor must contact the CCL liaison and the Executive Presbyter indicating the presbytery/denomination in which he/she is currently serving in order that a reference check may be completed before the Search Committee moves ahead with the process
2. Presbytery Provided: At any given time CCL or the Executive Presbyter may have PIFs on file of available interims pastors
3. Church Leadership Connection (CLC): It is possible to place the Ministry Information Form (MIF) online by using the denominational matching system. CLC login and password can only be obtained from the Executive Presbyter's Office.

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Potential interim pastors who are under consideration by the interim pastor search committee may be asked to preach to the committee privately or at a neutral pulpit. They should not preach in the congregation if they are seeking to be a candidate for the interim position.

Steps completed before the interim hiring process is finalized:

1. All executive presbyter referencing is completed and clearance has been given
2. If the pastor is not a member of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, he/she has given permission for the presbytery to conduct a background history and credit.
3. Clear goals for the interim period has been established and agreed to by the pastor, the session and CCL. These are stated in the contract.
4. The one-year interim contract has been negotiated and agreed to by the pastor, the session and CCL. The CCL liaison may provide a copy of a sample interim contract. The contract should be clear about salary/benefits, moving expenses, and termination provisions. The contract may be renewed with the agreement of all parties.
5. A timeline has been established for the assessment of the ministry goals stated in the contract.
6. If the pastor is not a member of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, he/she has appeared before the Commission on Preparation and Credentials or one of the regional commissions for the membership examination and has been received into membership.

D. Interim Period

1. Establish a preliminary outline of the steps for completion in the interim time and maintain frequent, clear communication with the congregation.
2. Work with the session to accomplish the agreed upon goals of the interim period and maintain the assessment timeline, making necessary corrections as needed.
3. Keep the development tasks of the congregation before the session and the congregation. Acknowledge progress of each.
4. Assist as needed with the Mission Study in preparation for the writing of the Ministry Information Form (MIF).
5. When the time is right, encourage the election of the Pastor Nominating Committee.
6. Be a resource to the Pastor Nominating Committee only in the area of how things are to be accomplished. The primary resource person to the Pastor Nominating Committee is the CCL liaison.

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E. Relationship to Former Pastor and New Called Pastor

1. The Interim Pastor should endeavor to maintain a relationship with the former pastor/s which is cordial, helpful, and sensitive to all parties, but also establishes very clear boundaries concerning the role of the former pastor/s during the interim period.
2. Communication with the former pastor/s should be at the initiative of the interim pastor, and any involvement by the previous pastor/s in the life of the congregation and its members should come at the invitation of the interim pastor. *It is important that the former pastor/s practice due diligence in not breaking the boundaries set by CCL and the interim pastor.* It is the responsibility of the former pastor/s not to accept an invitation to fill any functions they performed during their tenure as pastor of that church, nor indicate a willingness to do so, unless the invitation has first come from the interim pastor, not from a congregation or its members.
3. The previous pastor/s and the pastor's families (spouses and children) should not attend worship services or social events during the interim period and for at least one year following the installation of the next pastor. After that, discretion should be exercised regarding frequency of appearances. The purpose of this is to allow the next installed pastor the opportunity to become accepted fully as the congregation's new leader with as few difficulties as possible. Exceptions to this, in a case of crisis, should be dealt with moderator, session and Commission on Congregations and Leadership.

F. Arrival of New Pastor

1. A brief period of 2-4 weeks is recommended between the leave-taking of the interim pastor and the arrival of the next installed pastor. This allows time for the congregation to process the ending of the interim period and prepare to welcome the new pastor.
2. It is the prerogative of the newly installed pastor to make contact with the interim pastor.