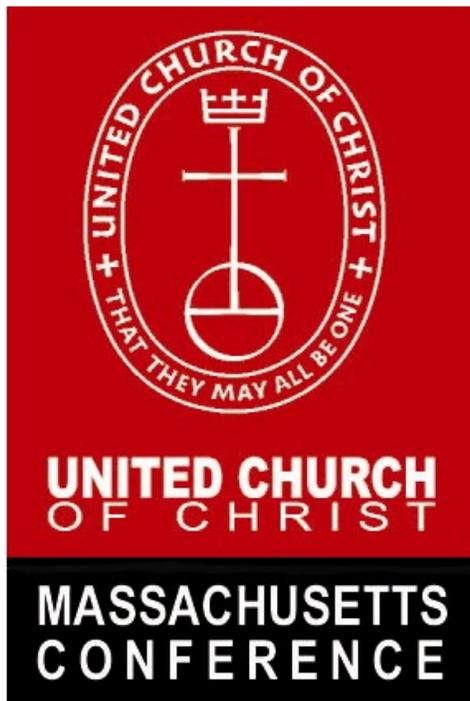


A MANUAL FOR INTERIM MINISTRY



**Commission for Leadership Development
Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ**

Acknowledgements

This *Manual for Interim Ministry in the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ* has been developed by the Interim Ministry Committee of the Commission on Leadership Development in response to resolutions approved by delegates to the General Synod of the United Church of Christ and the Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of UCC.

Our thanks to members of the committee for the many long hours and dedicated work in seeing this project to its conclusion.

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Introduction
For
A Manual for Interim Ministry
Massachusetts Conference of United Church of Christ

I. DEFINITION OF INTERIM

Within the United Church of Christ, interim ministry is understood to be the specialized, time-limited pastoral ministry provided to a local congregation or other ecclesiastical setting during the search process for a person to be called to provide settled ministerial leadership in that setting. Within interim ministry there are varieties of leadership that include:

A. Transitional Specialist:

This is an ordained minister with specific and special training for working with churches that are in-between settled ministers. This person will not be a candidate for the position of settled minister in the church being served as interim.

B. Interim Minister:

This is an ordained minister who has not taken special training for working with churches in transition. He/she will not be a candidate for the position of settled minister in the church being served as interim.

C. Supply Minister:

This is a minister, who may be ordained or a lay person, who is available for part-time service including worship leadership and emergency pastoral care.

II. EXPECTATIONS

The Interim Pastor is expected to function within a church in two major ways:

A. She or he provides basic pastoral services for the continuation of the church's mission and ministries through –

1. Leading the worship life of the church;
2. Providing pastoral care through visitation, counseling;
3. Officiating at weddings and funerals;
4. Attending meetings of official church bodies;
5. Providing leadership for church programs, as agreed upon, e.g., confirmation, adult education.

B. She or he also helps the church focus on issues of identity and mission in specific and intentional ways, as it evaluates its past and present plans for its future.

This is accomplished by giving careful attention to what the Alban Institute has identified as the five developmental tasks of a congregation in an interim time.

These tasks are:

1. Coming to Terms with History

The congregation needs to complete its closure with the departed pastor, working through its feelings of loss, hurt, anger, guilt, etc... Gaining perspective on its past, both immediate and long range, helps the congregation prepare for the future. This

challenge is crucial when there has been a long pastorate, an involuntary departure, or a conflict within the congregation. The resolution of these dynamics strongly enhances the success of the new settled pastor.

2. Discovering a New Identity

Over time congregations change as they respond to various pastoral leaders, changes in their world content, and modifications in their internal circumstances. The interim time provides a unique opportunity for congregational self-study leading to a focusing on the congregation's present reality.

3. Allowing Needed Leadership Change

A change of pastoral leadership often precipitates changes in the lay leadership as well. Old leaders may take a less active role while new persons become more involved. Many congregations address their internal leadership needs during the interim time.

4. Reaffirming Covenant with the United Church of Christ

A change of pastoral leadership is a time when the local congregation may more clearly understand and experience its relationship with the wider church, often becoming more acquainted with its supportive resources. An opportunity also exists to strengthen the congregation's identity as part of the United Church of Christ.

5. Commitment to New Directions in Ministry

As the interim period progresses the congregation becomes better prepared to move forward under new leadership, furthering a mission which is emerging from its self-study and its understanding of its opportunities for service and witness. The congregation becomes eager to embrace new initiatives in partnership with its new settled pastor.

III. OUTLINE/OVERVIEW OF INTERIM TIME

In addition to the essential and well-documented developmental tasks of the congregation in its interim period are the five process tasks of the interim pastor, which provide an outline of overview of the interim transitional period. They are commonly identified as follows:

A. Joining the System

Effective interim pastors find ways to make quick and significant connections with the congregation they are serving. Such connections may be formed by adopting a few significant local customs. At the same time an interim pastor attaches to the system *emotionally*, the interim pastor must also maintain a detachment. A sense that the interim pastor is simultaneously an "insider" and an "outsider" increases the power of the interim pastor to be of service to the congregation.

B. Analyzing the System

After an interim pastor has begun to join the system, she or he must then commence a more systematic reflection on the nature of the system. Analysis begins early in the interim's ministry in a particular church, but it actually never stops. The result of the early analysis becomes a hypothesis, and this hypothesis forms the basis for choice of focus and responsibility in the fourth task.

C. Connecting with the Regional Associate Conference Minister

From the very beginning the interim pastor needs to initiate and maintain strong connections with the MACUCC through the Regional Associate Conference Minister

responsible to the Association in which the interim serves. This connection is vital to the interim process and serves to support the important developmental task of Reaffirming Covenant with the United Church of Christ.

D. Focusing and Assuming Responsibility

This very important task is based on several factors including:

1. The leader's understanding of role and responsibility,
2. The particular skills and experiences of the leader,
3. The indications of relative openness in the system to one or more of the issues identified including the agreement from other responsible leaders in the congregation.
4. The interim's understanding of God's call to her or him in this particular situation.
 - In some settings the focus might be on healing from grief or reconciliation following conflict. In another congregation the need to clarify roles and structure might call for leadership. Spiritual renewal is also a frequent priority. In every situation, the focus of the interim leader needs to include self-care and acceptance of limitations of responsibility!

E. Exiting and Evaluating

Frequently the best gift to a church organization for the interim period is an experience of a healthy farewell! Assisting the congregation in learning from the interim time is included in this task. Interim leaders need to always remember that the exiting process includes the clear break in relationships after the pastorate has ended.

F. Exit Interview

If possible, an exit interview with the Regional Associate Conference Minister will be arranged by the Regional Associate Conference Minister.

Segments of the above have been reprinted from:

Called Interim Ministry, Guideline for United Church of Christ Committees on the Ministry, Draft 6/14/99, pg. 1

Our Pastor is Leaving, A Guide for Church Leaders, published by the Ohio Conference United Church of Christ, Nov. 1996, pg. 1

Guidelines for Interim Pastorates, Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, Fourth Edition, Spring 1997, pg. 5

Interim Ministry Basic Education Workbook, Interim Ministry Network, P.O. Box 21251, Baltimore MD 21228-0751, 1995, Section 5, pgs 22-27. ENGAGING AN INTERIM PASTOR

ENGAGING AN INTERIM PASTOR: AN OUTLINE OF THE PROCESS

When the pastor resigns, the **Local Church** and the **Regional Associate Conference Minister** work through the following steps:

LOCAL CHURCH	REGIONAL ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER	INTERIM PASTOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Contacts the Regional Associate Conference Minister ❖ Appropriate Church Body completes an Interim Job Description Worksheet and sends to the Regional Associate Conference Minister. ❖ Appropriate Church Body reviews Interim Minister resumes and/or profiles and decides whom to interview. Makes arrangements for interviewing potential candidates. ❖ Choose candidate for Interim Pastor. ❖ Negotiates Covenant-Contract with Interim Pastor. ❖ Covenant Contract signed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Church Representative ▪ Interim Pastor ▪ Regional Associate Conference Minister, who forwards copy to Church and Ministry Committee of the Association <p>Prepares:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Services of Closure for the Pastor OR Service of Closure for the Pastor AND Service of Welcome for and Covenant with the Interim Pastor AND Introduction for the Interim Pastor. ❖ Communicates periodically with Regional Associate Conference Minister regarding process of the Interim time. ❖ Conducts Exit Interview with the Interim Pastor and evaluation of the Interim time. ❖ Prepares a Service of Closure for the Interim. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Meets with appropriate Church Body to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce them to concepts of Interim Ministry. ▪ Introduce them to the Manual and Guidelines. ▪ Contacts potential Interim candidates and sends names to appropriate Church Body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Updates Interim Pastor Resume and notifies Regional Associate Conference Ministers of availability to serve. ❖ May request resume be sent to a specific church? ❖ Interviews with Church. ❖ Negotiates Covenant-Contract. ❖ Participates in preparation of Service of Welcome and Covenant. ❖ Communicates periodically with Regional Associate Conference Minister regarding progress of Interim. ❖ Participates in Exit Interview and evaluation. ❖ Shares in a Service of Closure.

COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

- ❖ The interim is not a time to consider “saving money” on staffing. If a church needs a full-time settled pastor, the church will need a full-time interim pastor.
- ❖ For a full-time interim position, a full-time salary and benefit package should be negotiated, based on the church’s current budget and on the compensation package of the previous pastor and in keeping with compensation guidelines of the Massachusetts Conference. Refer to the current year’s guidelines for recommended compensation.
- ❖ For a part-time interim pastor, calculate the percentage of a full-time package. Benefits should be negotiated as well. If a part-time interim is not covered for pension and health insurance by other employment, the local church needs to pay these benefits during an interim period of three months or longer.
- ❖ Reimbursement for travel should be equivalent to IRS guidelines. The interim pastor should submit a monthly voucher of total miles traveled. Because interim pastors often commute a long distance from home, this mileage is also reimbursed. *
- ❖ All business and incidental expenses, such as phone calls, are to be reimbursed.
- ❖ Vacation time is computed at one week for each three months’ service. Additional time may be included for education purposes.
- ❖ Housing, whether provided by allowance or in a parsonage, needs to be negotiated. If the interim must travel a long distance, overnight accommodations for one or two nights a week may be provided in addition to a housing allowance.
- ❖ *NOTE: The Internal Revenue Service considers employment which is expected to last a year or less to be “temporary employment”, and persons in this category may be reimbursed for mileage to and from their primary residence at the IRS rate. Chapter 28, page 178, if the IRS Regulations states, in part: *If your assignment or job away from your main place of work is temporary, your tax home does not change. You are considered to be away from home for the whole period and your travel expenses are deductible. Generally, a temporary assignment in a single location is one that is realistically expected to last (and does in fact last) for one year or less.* Many tax advisors interpret this to mean that a straight mileage reimbursement for commuting interim pastors is reimbursable. If you have any question or concern, check with your tax advisor or your local IRS Office.

RESOURCES

THE CHURCH'S EXPECTATIONS OF ITS INTERIM MINISTERS

Faith Affirmations

- ❖ Understands and affirms the faith affirmations found in the *Church's Expectations of its Candidates for Ordination*.
- ❖ Has a sense of call to called interim ministry.

Church Loyalty

- ❖ Understands and affirms the expectations for **Church Loyalty** found in the *Church's Expectations of its Candidates for Ordination*.
- ❖ Understands and affirms the *Ordained Minister's Code*, particularly as it relates to interim ministry.
- ❖ Is committed to guiding interim churches through their transition to seek and call a new minister.
- ❖ Supports the church's participation in the United Church of Christ search process while providing interim ministry service to that church and refrains from interfering or becoming involved in the church's search.
- ❖ Will not become a candidate for the ministry position in any setting where interim ministry is provided.
- ❖ Advocates for fair and just compensation for all UCC pastors, including called interim ministers and those who will be the newly called minister.

Knowledge and Skills

- ❖ Has the knowledge and skills named in the *Church's Expectations of its Candidates for Ordination*.
- ❖ Has engaged in a disciplined study of and has acquired considerable knowledge and skill in interim ministry, including but not limited to; understanding and appreciation for the nature of interim ministry; knowledge regarding the developmental tasks of churches in interim transition; and skill for the performance of interim ministry.

Personal Qualities

- ❖ Has the **Personal Qualities** found in the *Church's Expectations of its Candidates for Ordination*.
- ❖ Ability to quickly form and appropriately relinquish relationships.
- ❖ Acknowledges and tends to self-care needs amidst the dynamic transitions inherent in interim ministry.
- ❖ Possesses the capacity to thrive amidst constant change inherent in life as a called interim minister.
- ❖ Respects, honors, and adapts to the cultural milieus and traditions of a variety of local churches.

NO CANDIDACY RATIONALE

The Question: *Why is it not a good practice for interim pastors to be considered as a candidate for the “installed” pastor of the congregation? And how can we keep this from happening?*

The questions were raised by a middle judicatory executive and are representative of an issue faced by everyone who works with the selection processes of calling pastors. The executive who asked that the issue be addressed went on to write, “We desperately need...a rationale which is relevant to the average congregation, specifying why this is not a healthy practice.” One other pertinent point was made by this executive, “It does not seem to matter whether or not interim ministers have received specialized education...they seem to be as vulnerable as those who have not received training.”

My experience indicates that congregations care very little for policies that prohibit certain practices just because there are policies set by some governing body at some time. Congregational leaders will, however, be reasonable if certain practices do have clear rationale which makes some sense to them. Here are six rationale statements that can perhaps be useful to middle judicatory folk as they deal with this issue.

Rationale One: *Interim pastors can enable congregations to deal with their agenda better if they have not vested interest in their own long-range call to that congregation.*

The interim pastor needs to be free to be involved from a perspective or stance of “what is best for this congregation to engage in during the interim period”. Interim pastors needs to help congregational leaders identify key agenda needing to be addressed at this time. It is essentially impossible for an interim pastor to be objective when the question becomes, “what must I do to get the call here as the installed pastor?”

Rationale Two: *Trust that persons keep their word is essential in covenantal relationships; changing the “rules of the game” may foster distrust in the pastor and the congregational leaders who “changed the rules.”*

When an interim pastor becomes a candidate for the open position it changes the conditions/agreements upon which the interim pastor was hired for specific purpose. Usually there has been no general congregational involvement in a search process and no congregational vote or concurrence to the call issued by the governing board of the congregation for the interim pastor. Some people may feel betrayed, fooled, or taken advantage of, and distrust may then be part of the climate in which a new long-term relationship will begin.

Rationale Three: *Consideration of the interim pastor as a candidate will short change the search process.*

When a search/call/nominating committee decides to consider the interim pastor, it will probably shortchange the search process. The focus will likely be on the personality of the interim pastor rather than on an objective definition of what the congregation is wanting to be in the future and the appropriate skills, strengths and abilities needed in the next pastor. When the search/call/nominating committee decides to find a way to “keep the interim” they can no longer be objective in the crucial task they are performing on behalf of the congregation.

Rationale Four: *It is risky to call an interim pastor when there may be underlying opposition to that individual by persons in the congregation.*

The interim pastor may be liked by many, but usually there will be some persons who do not like the interim pastor for a variety of reasons. Perhaps the interim pastor has had to push, confront, challenge or strongly discourage certain behavior, actions or policies. This may have angered or alienated the interim pastor from some individuals or groups. The anger or hostility can usually be tolerated knowing the interim pastor will one day (not too far in the future) be leaving, but now if the interim pastor is called for a long-term position there will likely be strong opposition and undermining of the interim pastor's ability to be effective for the long haul.

Rationale Five: *It is best to keep clear the contract with the interim pastor as an interim position and not to "muck it up" with considerations of being a candidate for the open pulpit.*

Suppose the interim pastor is considered as a candidate and then is not chosen by the decisions making bodies during the process? It will likely make it extremely difficult for the interim pastor to continue as an effective interim pastor for that congregation. Feelings generated by the interim pastor ¹and those who either supported or opposed him/her for the position cannot be easily discarded after a decision has been made.

Rationale Six: *The church needs to be fair to all possible candidates and protect the concept of what an intentional interim ministry program can provide for congregations.*

It is not fair to other persons who want to be considered for the open position. The interim pastor will have a decided advantage in the call process. If interim pastors become the called/installed pastors the trend will build up a distrust in the interim program of a conference/region/synod and do irreparable harm to the concept of intentional interim ministry.

Of course there are probably some exceptions where the interim pastor could indeed be the best possible candidate. However, the attitude that "we are an exception" is really a myth predicted on the false assumption "there is only one person" who is right for us as our pastor now. There will always be many candidates who can serve the congregation. The search/call/nominating committee needs to be free to screen all interested candidates without the undue, though often unintentional, influence of the interim pastor.

How do you respond to the original question?

In a free call system (which most readers operate in), I know of only one way, and that is to rely on the interim pastor to simply say, "No thank you, I'm not a possible candidate." It is a matter of ethics and trust if the interim pastors do not believe in the six rationales, then those of us in the middle judicatory positions will never "sell them" to congregations.

¹ Used by permission of the Interim Ministry Network
[MACUCC 1999]

INTERIM PASTOR JOB DESCRIPTION WORKSHEET

This checklist is to be used *before* you interview candidates. Approximate the number of hours needed each week for each area of responsibility. It is often helpful to ask the person presently in this position to make an estimate of how she/he allocates time in each of the categories.

		Hours per week
A.	WORSHIP	
	Sunday preparation	_____
	Sunday service	_____
	Special services	_____
B.	PASTORAL CARE	
	Hospital/Nursing home visits	_____
	Home visits	_____
	Spiritual Care/Counseling in office	_____
C.	ADMINISTRATION	
	General	_____
	Meetings	_____
	Planning and evaluation	_____
D.	CHRISTIAN EDUCATION	
	Adult Education	_____
	Confirmation	_____
	Youth Groups	_____
	Church school resourcing	_____
E.	OUTREACH	
	Mission concerns	_____
	Community involvement	_____
	Other involvement	_____
F.	OTHER EXPECTATIONS	
	Denominational	_____
	Community	_____
G.	CONTINUING EDUCATION	_____
	AVERAGE OF TOTAL HOURS OF PASTORAL SERVICE PER WEEK:	_____

INTERIM MINISTRY COVENANT-CONTRACT

Between

The _____ Church, _____

And

The Reverend _____

For the purpose of providing interim pastoral leadership during a period of rediscovery and adjustment to change, it is agreed that the Reverend _____ will begin service as Interim Pastor of _____ Church in _____, Massachusetts on _____.

It is understood that the Diaconate and the Interim Pastor will review this Covenant-Contract at least every six months. It is agreed that this Covenant-Contract shall be in effect for 12 months or until sixty days following a call being extended to a new pastor, whichever comes first, after which time it can be renegotiated up to the time of the start-up of the new pastor. Twenty-four months shall be considered maximum time for the interim period. Thirty days notice shall be given in writing by either party of intention to decline an extension. Should either the Interim Pastor or the church wish to terminate this agreement, 60 days written notice shall be given.

During the interim time the pastor and congregation will, in covenant with one another and with the help of God, seek to:

- ❖ Provide worship experiences and the practice of ministry with the congregation and community;
- ❖ Engage in congregational self-study and goal setting by reviewing the past and planning for the future in such a way as to strengthen and enhance the mission and unity of this church;
- ❖ Prepare for the ministry of a new pastor who will be duly called by the congregation
- ❖ Work on the five Developmental Tasks of congregations in the interim period:
 - Coming to terms with history
 - Discovering a new identity
 - Strengthening patterns of lay leadership
 - Strengthening denominational ties
 - Preparing for new pastoral leadership

It is agreed that under no circumstances may the Interim Pastor be a candidate for the position of called pastor. The Interim Pastor will not allow his/her name to be submitted as a candidate nor will members of the congregation ask that this be done. Upon termination and departure as pastor, the Interim Pastor will sever his/her pastoral relations with this congregation, recognizing that all future pastoral functions should be fulfilled by his/her successor.

It is further agreed that the Interim Pastor will not assist the Pastoral Search Committee in the selection of a pastoral candidate. It may be helpful, at times, for the Interim Pastor to advise the committee in terms of process, but this may be done only in consultation with an agreement of the Conference staff person resourcing the search process and the chair of the Search Committee.

OUR SHARED EXPECTATIONS

The pastoral and professional leadership provided by the Reverend _____ will amount to _____ (full, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$) time or approximately _____ hours per week. Should additional time be needed to provide pastoral services, the matter will be reviewed by the _____ Board/Committee; and either the members of the church will assist with the pastoral duties or additional compensation will be offered to the Interim Pastor for the additional time.

The Interim Pastor will be responsible to the congregation at large, and specifically to the _____ Board/Committee.

Pastoral services shall include: [The following are examples of what might be included]

Leadership of Sunday worship, administration of the sacraments, and special services as needed

Counseling in crisis situations and referral

Serving as lead teacher and resource for the Confirmation program

Teacher/leaders of occasional adult education programs

Visitation of hospitalized, ill and other members of the parish needing pastoral care

Attending and resourcing meetings of church boards and committees

Providing leadership and training for members regarding congregational self study, future planning, membership outreach and stewardship

Providing administrative oversight for the daily affairs of the church, including being "head of staff"

Remaining active in the name of this church in the _____ Association and in the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ

Participation on behalf of this church in ecumenical and interfaith activities in this community

The congregation will support and cooperate with the Interim Pastor in every way and will assume responsibility for:

Regular attendance at worship and meetings

Continued financial support for the church and its mission and ministries

Support the Interim Pastor in the ministry of this church to the community

Sustained lay leadership and shared ministry

Establishment of an Interim Steering Committee of not more than five persons agreed upon by the Interim Pastor and the Church Council whose purpose will be to serve as a confidential support and

advising group for the Interim Pastor, to monitor the progress of the accomplishment of Interim Tasks, and to act as a communication link between the Interim Pastor and the congregation.

Participation in the affairs of the _____ Association and the Massachusetts Conference United Church of Christ.

Secretarial support services.

Keeping the Interim Pastor informed of the timing of the transitional leadership, including candidate Sunday and contract termination.

Participation in a support and evaluation process during the interim process and at the termination of the interim pastorate.

The _____ Church agrees to provide the following compensation to the interim pastor:

Base salary	\$ _____
Housing allowance	\$ _____
Social Security offset	\$ _____
Health and dental insurance for pastor and family/partner	\$ _____
Annuity payment	\$ _____
Continuing education	\$ _____

In addition the church will provide travel allowance of \$ _____ per mile, reimbursement for expenses up to \$ _____ per month, vacation of one week for each three months of service, and continuing education time of one week for every six months of service.

In accepting this agreement, effective _____ (date), we hereby attach our signatures, making this Covenant-Contract binding upon us in accordance with the above outlined terms.

Interim Pastor _____ Date _____

For the Church _____ Date _____

Office held _____

For the Association _____ Date _____

Office held _____

(Name of Church)

ORDER FOR
THE CELEBRATION OF INTERIM MINISTRY
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

(Date)

(Time)

(Order of Worship Traditional to the Local Church)

Possible Liturgy for the Celebration of Interim Ministry

COVENANT WITH THE INTERIM PASTOR

Presentation: (Moderator shall present the Candidate)

Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that the Church might be presented before God in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring good tidings, who publish peace.

Reading of the Covenant-Contract: (Moderator – Care should be taken to insure that the agreement is not, in its particulars, at variance with the Covenant the Interim Minister has with the Association.)

Covenant Statement of the Interim Minister: (Regional Associate Conference Minister, representative of the Committee on Church and Ministry or local church representative.)

With sacred regard for your position as an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ and also for your current standing within the Association, do you promise to serve this congregation as its Interim Pastor and to represent this Church, whenever possible, in ecclesiastical councils and such other meetings that may from time to time, be convened? Do you further promise to seek the advice and counsel of the Regional Associate Conference Minister whose familiarity with the special conditions of the local Church will be a valuable resource for you? And, trusting in the work of the Holy Spirit, do you promise not to seek or to encourage or to accept a call from the Church you now serve to become its permanent pastor?

IN THE NAME OF GOD, I PROMISE.

Charge to the Interim Pastor: (Regional Associate Conference Minister, representative of the Committee on Church and Ministry or local church representative.)

Understanding that the grace of God has called you into ministry and summoned you to serve this Church and, further, hearing again the words of your own covenant with the (Name)_____ Association of the United Church of Christ, I ask you now in the presence of God and this congregation: Do you promise, to the best of your ability, to execute your office as Interim Pastor in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus Christ – to preach and teach the Word of God, to administer the sacraments, and to fulfill the duties of the pastoral office?

I WILL ENDEAVOR TO DO SO, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

Charge to the Congregation: (Regional Associate Conference Minister, representative of the Committee on Church and Ministry, or local church representative.)

Beloved members of Christ’s Church, you have heard the solemn promise made by _____ whom you have asked to be your Interim Pastor. Do you, now, receive _____ into this office? Do you further promise, to the best of your abilities, to show him/her the love, honor, and support due to a minister of Christ’s gospel?

WE DO.

Recognition: (Moderator)

Upon these mutual promises and in the presence of God and this congregation, I recognize you as Interim Pastor of this Church, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Right Hand of Welcome: (Regional Associate Conference Minister, representative of the Committee on Church and Ministry or local church representative.)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

We thank you, O God, for the Church of Jesus Christ and the ministry of reconciliation! Bless both this congregation and its Interim Pastor and seal the union into which we have entered, that in all things we may faithfully work together to the glory of your name.

(Order of Worship Traditional to the Local Church)

NAME OF CHURCH
(United Church of Christ)
Address of Church

**THE ORDER FOR THE RECOGNITION OF THE END OF THE SETTLED MINISTRY AND THE
BEGINNING OF AN INTERIM MINISTRY**

DATE

The Reverend (Settled Minister)

The Reverend (Regional Associate Conference Minister)

The Reverend (Interim Pastor)

REGIONAL ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER:

Our church family is constantly changing. People come and go. Babies are born. Children grow up. People commit themselves to one another. Loved ones and friends among us come to the end of their lives. Individuals move into our community and church life. Others leave us, moving away to new places, new experiences, and new opportunities.

It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we share the time of farewell with _____ who is leaving.

On (date), this local church called _____ to serve as pastor.

PASTOR:

I thank (church), its members and friends, for the love, kindness, and support shown me these last _____ years. I ask forgiveness for the mistakes I have made. I am grateful for the ways my leadership has been accepted. As I leave, I carry with me all that I have learned here.

PEOPLE:

We receive your thankfulness, offer forgiveness, and accept that you now leave to minister elsewhere.

We express our gratitude for your time among us. We ask your forgiveness for our mistakes. Your influence on our faith and faithfulness will not leave us at your departure.

PASTOR:

I forgive you and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.

REGIONAL ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER:

Do you, the members and friends of (church) release _____ from the duties of pastor?

PEOPLE:

We do, with the help of God.

REGIONAL ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER:

Do you offer your encouragement for his/her ministry soon to begin as pastor of (church)?

PEOPLE:

We do, with the help of God.

REGIONAL ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER:

Do you, () release this local church from turning to you and depending on you?

PASTOR:

I do, with the help of God.

REGIONAL ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER:

Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here and on the relationship with another who will come to serve?

PASTOR:

I do, with the help of God.

REGIONAL ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER:

Let us pray. O God, we give thanks for remembered times when we, together, have shared the life of faith. We thank you for the moments we have shared with () in worship, in learning, in service. We pray that () will be aware of your Spirit’s guidance as he/she moves to a new and unknown place of service.

PEOPLE:

God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future which rests in your care. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and disappointments. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories but move in new directions. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

REGIONAL ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER:

Go now, surrounded by our love and led by the promises of God, the presence of Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

REGIONAL ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER:

(Church), United Church of Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has invited () as its Interim Pastor and teacher. (), seeing that you are called to ordained ministry by the

grace of God and (church) has been led to call you as Interim Pastor and teacher, are you willing to enter into covenant with its members who are one in Christ?

PASTOR:

I am willing and promise to serve the church faithfully, preaching and teaching the Word of God, administering the sacraments and fulfilling the pastoral office, according to the faith and order of the United Church of Christ.

REGIONAL ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER:

Members of (church) and the United Church of Christ, will those who are able, rise and affirm your covenant with your Interim Pastor and teacher.

PEOPLE:

We the members of (church), receive () as our pastor and teacher, promising to labor with him/her in the ministry of the Gospel, and to give him/her due honor and support.

REGIONAL ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER:

Let us pray. Almighty God, you have called your servants to make promises before you; now enable us to keep our vows that we may remain steadfast in faith and fruitful in every good work. Bless, we pray, your servant, (), to whom the care of your people in this church is now committed. Pour out your Holy Spirit on him/her, on the people of (church), United Church of Christ, and on all the churches of the United Church of Christ Association, that our mutual ministry may be served with all faithfulness, diligence, and courage. Grant us the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind. Make our ministry a means of awakening the careless, strengthening the faithful, comforting the afflicted, building up our church, and converting sinners to you. Guard us against the snares of temptation that we may be kept pure in heart, fervent in spirit, and valiant against evil. And at the last, by your grace, receive us in your eternal home, where, with you and the Holy Spirit, Christ reigns in glory, one God forever and ever.

A LITANY FOR THE CLOSURE OF AN INTERIM MINISTRY

Leader: Eternal God, we give you thanks and praise for calling us into your church to be the Body of Christ in the world.

People: Thanks be to you for the men and women throughout the years who have heard the Word and kept the faith that we, in our day, might know the Good News of Christ and proclaim it.

Leader: We give you thanks for the people of all ages and backgrounds, tongues and persuasions who have found meaning and purpose, strength and insight through this church, and who have given themselves to increase its ministry and outreach.

People: Thanks be to you for the pastors and teachers of this congregation whose ministries we remember.

Leader: Especially this day, we give thanks for (name of Interim Pastor), who has shared our journey of faith these recent months and provided us with leadership which has helped us move through this interim time with confidence.

People: We are grateful for those among us who have served on the Search Committee for our new minister, giving generously of their time, their energy and their talents.

Leader: In confidence O God, we now look to the future, and pray that your Spirit will lead us to new beginnings and new visions of the faithful ministry you can call us to in our church, our community and our world.

People: May your blessing be upon (name of minister who has been called), whom we have called to be our new pastoral leader. Give to him/her the courage of a prophet, the sensitivity of a pastor, the skill of a teacher and the wisdom of one who can discern and enable truth.

Unison: **Now speak to each of us the word that we need to hear. Bind us again in covenant with you, with each other and with the wider church that your will be done and the Body of Christ strengthened. Amen and Amen.**

(NOTE: THIS IS BEST USED A FEW MONTHS BEFORE THE INTERIM MINISTER CONCLUDES SERVICE TO THE CONGREGATION.)

REFLECTING ON OUR INTERIM TIME

Introduction: I appreciate your taking the time to complete this feedback sheet. PLEASE BE HONEST! I will not be “graded” on this. It is for my growth and reflection upon my ministry with your church. Your thoughtful comments will help me as I continue in Interim Ministry here and in another setting. [signature of Interim Pastor]

PART I

Below is a brief description of each major “Developmental Task of a Congregation in its Interim Time” which the Interim Pastor helps the congregation address. Please try to rate the Interim Pastor’s effectiveness of leadership through these tasks.

A. Coming to terms with the HISTORY of the local church

If it is to be free from the future, a congregation with a vacant pastorate needs to work at understanding where it has come from and how it arrived where it is now – not just its chronological history, but how and why it does things as it does. It is important for the congregation to articulate its feelings about previous pastors, be they love or rage or somewhere in between. If this is done, the “ghosts” of former pastors lose inappropriate power over the congregation and become parts of its history. This task releases the congregation from the improper and/or inhibiting influence of the past and allows for the future.

❖ The Interim Pastor has contributed toward accomplishing this task (circle one):

NOT AT ALL SO-SO SATISFACTORILY SIGNIFICANTLY GREATLY

❖ The task could have been accomplished better if the Interim Pastor had/had not done...

❖ The most significant change in the church, related to the task, has been...

B. Discovering a NEW IDENTITY within the parish

Congregations tend to built up myths about themselves. Often the myths seem to be self-fulfilling, and sometimes separated from reality. For example, one congregation might say, “We are a growing suburban parish,” when actually the church is now composed of mostly the elderly and is within the inner city. In this task, the congregation should discover what myths have put them out of touch with what they have become and with their world. The congregation should begin to develop a realistic sense of who it is and what he community is like. The congregation develops a richer, more helpful myth about itself in this task.

❖ The Interim Pastor has contributed toward accomplishing this task (circle one):

NOT AT ALL SO-SO SATISFACTORILY SIGNIFICANTLY GREATLY

- ❖ The task could have been accomplished better if the Interim Pastor had/had not done...
- ❖ The most significant change in the church, related to the task, has been...

C. SHIFTS OF POWER within the church

Congregations usually look, think, and act in ways consistent with what the former pastor did. His/her style of ministry and leadership attracted leaders who worked well with that style, even in a negative sense. During the Interim period, new centers of power in the congregation form. In this task, shifts of leadership take place, with new leaders emerging and former leaders moving to other/new areas of ministry, in the congregation and elsewhere. This task calls for the emergence of new leadership and consequent shifting of power. (Note: “power” should not necessarily be viewed as negative.)

- ❖ The Interim Pastor has contributed toward accomplishing this task (circle one):
 NOT AT ALL SO-SO SATISFACTORILY SIGNIFICANTLY GREATLY
- ❖ The task could have been accomplished better if the Interim Pastor had/had not done...
- ❖ The most significant change in the church, related to the task, has been...

D. Rethinking DENOMINATIONAL LINKAGES

The previous pastor’s passions or prejudices usually flavor a congregation’s relationship with the denomination. With good interim leadership, the congregation sees that the resources of the larger denomination and its staff really have a lot to offer, and the congregation also discovers what its particular gifts and talents are that can be shared with others via the denominational connection. In this task, the congregation re-examines and explores what it means to be related to its particular heritage (denominational structure).

- ❖ The Interim Pastor has contributed toward accomplishing this task (circle one):
 NOT AT ALL SO-SO SATISFACTORILY SIGNIFICANTLY GREATLY
- ❖ The task could have been accomplished better if the Interim Pastor had/had not done...
- ❖ The most significant change in the church, related to the task, has been...

E. Commitment to NEW LEADERSHIP and a NEW FUTURE

It is one thing “hire” a new minister. It is another thing to commit oneself to a new pastor with a sense of new tasks and mission. This task should move a congregation toward a sense of its calling and to work together with a new pastor and new lay leadership, as well as excitement about a ministry and mission to be done together.

❖ The Interim Pastor has contributed toward accomplishing this task (circle one):

NOT AT ALL SO-SO SATISFACTORILY SIGNIFICANTLY GREATLY

❖ The task could have been accomplished better if the Interim Pastor had/had not done...

❖ The most significant change in the church, related to the task, has been...

PART II

A. Rate the Interim Pastor’s effectiveness in the following:

	(poor)			(good)	
Preaching/worship leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Pastoral Oversight	1	2	3	4	5
Administration, work with boards and committees	1	2	3	4	5
Relationship with staff	1	2	3	4	5

B. How well did the Interim deal with conflict situations?

1 2 3 4 5

Cite an incident:*

C. Sum up, in your own words, what you feel was the impact of the interim ministry on the life of the church.*

D. This is what I learned about “my” church during the interim period:*

E. In what specific ways could the church have been helped MORE by the Interim Pastor?*

- F. What elements/skills/attributes would you like to see the Interim Pastor show in future Ministry settings?*

- G. In what areas do you feel the Interim Pastor shows real strength and gifts?*

- H. In what areas does the Interim Pastor need to grow and improve?*

Name of person giving evaluation _____ Date _____

***For additional space, please attach extra sheets.**