



## Interviewing Interim Pastors

Sierra Pacific Synod Office of the Bishop  
401 Santa Lucia Ave.  
Millbrae, CA 94030  
800-691-3207

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
8765 West Higgins Rd.  
Chicago, IL 60631  
800-638-3522

In the ELCA it is the practice that Pastors who serve congregations in an interim capacity are appointed by the Bishop of the synod. While this often serves to expedite the provision of pastoral care in a congregation during interim time, it is important to us in the Sierra Pacific Synod that congregations consent to any appointments made by the Bishop. We know that fruitful ministry is only done in the midst of trusting relationship.

The Congregation Council should interview the potential pastor for this interim season before discussing the details of compensation, benefits, and responsibilities.

The following questions are suggestions for the interview with the interim candidate whom the Bishop has appointed. In forming any particular question the key issue is, "What answer are you looking for? How will you know when it's answered well?" Each question may be evaluated in three ways: (a) What does it have to do with the position? (b) What do we need to know? (c) Would we be willing to answer the same questions about ourselves?

1. Tell us about your faith journey.
2. Tell us about your call to be a pastor
3. What are your gifts for ministry with and for a congregation?
4. What strengths do you bring to a congregation in interim?
5. What is your sense of call to interim ministry?
  - a. Have you had any training for interim ministry?
  - b. What do you find fulfilling about interim ministry?
  - c. What do you find challenging about interim ministry?
6. How do you see the role of pastor in interim ministry?
  - a. Can you describe your style of ministry to individuals as an interim pastor?
7. How might you lead us in discernment in this time of interim?
8. What steps do you take in helping others feel secure, trusted, and open with you?
9. How do you model and instill healthy communication during the season of interim?
10. Tell us about a time when you dealt with congregational conflict.
11. What is your leadership and management style?
12. Tell us about a time when you journeyed with a congregation in the midst of change.
13. What are some issues that typically occur during a time of interim, and how do you address them?
14. Why are you considering serving this congregation?

Just as the congregation will be discerning this partnership, the pastor will also be discerning whether they are called to serve your congregation during their season of interim. The pastor may ask questions such as those which follow. It would be advisable for the Congregation Council to consider their responses to these questions prior to the interview.

1. Tell me about your congregation.
2. What do you celebrate about this congregation?
3. What are the challenges that your congregation is facing?
4. What are some of the things you hope this congregation will do in the future that would benefit you? others?
5. Who are some of the ministry partners of this congregation?
6. What kinds of activities take place on a weekly/monthly basis?
7. Tell me about your stewardship and benevolence.
8. In what area(s) of social concern has the congregation been active?
9. If this congregation disappeared tomorrow, what would the community be missing?
10. How do you see the role of the pastor in this congregation?
11. Tell me about the staff and volunteer leadership of the congregation.
12. What resources are there for continuing education? Are there funds for the pastor to attend the annual Professional Leaders Conference?
13. What are the congregation's policies for vacation, sick leave, bereavement, and family leave?
14. What hardships has the congregation experienced in the past? Have there been any major conflicts?
15. What is the attitude of the congregation toward the church at large? Synod? ELCA?
16. What are the possibilities for growth?

After the congregation council has conducted their interview with the pastor, a second meeting should be arranged to discuss the compensation, benefits, and responsibilities of the pastor during their interim service.

The synod staff person who is assisting you will share a Sample Contract of Service with you and the interim pastor. This document can also be found on [spselca.org/call-process](http://spselca.org/call-process). You may use this document to structure and articulate the expectations of the partnership between the pastor and congregation. If the goals and objectives of the interim ministry exceed the allowable space of this sample form, you may wish to attach a more detailed addendum to the document. This contract and all addendum must be signed by the Bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod before service begins.

Additionally, the document Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities for Ministers of Word and Sacrament Under Call should be used to articulate the compensation and benefits for the pastor during their interim service. You can find this document at [spselca.org/call-process](http://spselca.org/call-process) under the title "Compensation & Benefits for a Pastor Form."