



Interviewing Interim Pastors

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In the ELCA it is the practice that Pastors who serve congregations in an interim capacity or season are appointed by the Bishop of the synod. While this often serves to expedite the provision of pastoral leadership, 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 partnership.

The Congregation Council and the Pastor should converse with one another to discern if this will be a fruitful partnership in the interim season of the congregation. These discussions should be a time to get to know one another as well as an opportunity to name expectations and responsibilities and discuss compensation.

Questions to get to know each other

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 call to be a pastor
2. Tell us about your 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?
3. How do you see your role in a congregation like ours?
4. How might you lead us in discernment in this time of interim?
5. What steps do you take in helping others feel secure, trusted, and open with you?
6. What is your leadership and management style?
7. Tell us about a time when you journeyed with a congregation in the midst of change.
8. What are some issues that typically occur during a time of interim, and how do you address them?
9. 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?

Questions about expectations and responsibilities.

Interim seasons are a time of intentional goals and objectives. Your congregation may be preparing to call their next settled pastor or discerning their next faithful path forward. Either way, the Pastor can aid you in this interim time.

It is wise to discuss what the specific responsibilities will be. Your synod staff representative can supply you with a sample contract that you can sign with your Pastor. Many of these considerations may be listed in that sample. You can also add more details or items. Consider these questions when discussing expectations and responsibilities:

- What is the worship schedule and what will the Pastor's responsibilities be regarding liturgy, volunteer recruitment & equipping, preaching, presiding, and special worship services?
- What administrative duties will the Pastor have?
- Are there staff supervisory responsibilities?
- What meetings will the pastor attend and what will be their role?
- What programs will the pastor be involved in and how?
- What does visitation look like in your congregation and what will be the expectations for the pastor?
- If this position is part time how will the 20 hrs./week (or the designated number of hours) be spent?
- Are there any interpersonal or systemic issues that the pastor can help you address?
- What will be the pastor's involvement in future directions planning? (*Work on this in consult with your synod representative*)

Questions about compensation.

The final thing you should be discussing together is compensation. To figure out the compensation of the Pastor for this interim time, you should use the same document you use for other pastors - the Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities for Ministers of Word and Sacrament Under Call. To aid you in filling out this document with your Pastor you may want to use the Compensation Workbook supplied by the synod. All of these documents can be found on the Sierra Pacific Synod website at <https://www.spselca.net/call-process-compensation>.

Your congregation may also need to work with Portico Benefit Services to determine benefits contributions for the Pastor. You can begin this by going to employerlink.porticobenefits.org.

Hopefully, in your conversations you will find a fruitful partnership between congregation and Pastor for this interim time. Be sure to keep your synod representative in the loop along the way. They will be glad to help you at any point in the process. When you find an equitable compensation and contract of service, all these documents should then be sent to the Office of the Bishop for signature before the pastor can begin their service.