

# Intentional Interim Ministry: Resource for Transition Teams

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The United Church of Canada  
L'Église Unie du Canada

Intentional Interim Ministry: Resource for Transition Teams (December 2021)



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## About This Resource

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This resource is directed to transition teams in communities of faith of The United Church of Canada. It answers the question: What are our responsibilities, key relationships, and tasks during a period of intentional interim ministry?

This is one in a series to guide the church in the area of intentional interim ministry. The other resources in this series are as follows:

- *Intentional Interim Ministry: Policy and Procedures for Designation*
- *Intentional Interim Ministry: Resource for Governing Body of Community of Faith*
- *Intentional Interim Ministry: Resource for Regional Council*

## Intentional Interim Ministry Practices

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Congratulations! Your community of faith is preparing to address changes within or around it through intentional interim ministry—an exciting journey of exploration and discovery.

This resource largely contains recommended ways to live out mandatory policies and procedures found section I.1.10 in *The Manual*. You are encouraged, but not required, to follow the best practices outlined in this resource. It provides best practices that offer guidance, information and recommendations for following the mandatory policies and procedures. For clarity, the policy related to Transition Teams from *The Manual* is repeated at the end.

Intentional interim ministry (often referred to simply as interim ministry) is an opportunity for a community of faith to take an intentional time out to seek spiritual and organizational renewal, to rediscover its identity, and to revitalize its mission.

You have agreed to serve on the transition team for your community of faith’s interim ministry period. The team will include four to six people from your community of faith, one or two representatives from the regional council, and the intentional interim minister, once chosen. With the guidance of the intentional interim minister, the transition team will lead your community of faith through a process of self-study, discernment, and visioning to rekindle its call to mission. The work will be interesting, challenging, and rewarding.

The intentional interim minister is trained to lead the interim ministry process. This document will give you an overview of the work.

### Transition Team’s Responsibilities

- Liaise and collaborate with the governing body of the community of faith.
- Choose a transition team representative to be a member of the governing body for the duration of the interim ministry.
- Select the intentional interim minister and prepare for their arrival.
- Provide leadership and work collaboratively with the intentional interim minister.
- Review, clarify, and develop the initial goals set for the interim ministry by the governing body and/or the regional council.
- Communicate and consult regularly with the community of faith and its subgroups.
- Promote conversation, learning, understanding, and transition in the community of faith.
- Involve the community of faith in the tasks of rediscovering its heritage, reinvigorating its leadership, claiming its identity and mission, clarifying its future, and renewing its connections to the wider church and community.
- Develop and implement plans that enable the community of faith to work on its goals.
- Regularly evaluate progress on the goals and be alert to emerging needs.
- Participate in the evaluation of the intentional interim minister and the interim ministry.
- Model responsible participation, healthy relationships, and faithful witness.

## Key Relationships for the Transition Team

- *With the governing body:* share information and make recommendations
- *With the intentional interim minister:* analyze what's needed and decide on actions
- *With the community of faith:* offer leadership that both challenges and reassures, in order that it makes the necessary changes to move on in its ministry
- *After the interim:* where possible, continue to give leadership in other roles so the new ways are integrated into the community of faith's ongoing life
- *With the regional council:* through its representative(s) on the transition team, receive support, encouragement, and perspective.

The transition team itself functions as a mini-laboratory for the transitions the community of faith will undergo. It explores the culture and dynamics of the community of faith, with all of its strengths and struggles. As the team analyzes what holds the community of faith back from its potential, those very issues may become apparent in its own discussions.

By intentionally building a cooperative climate, the team learns to change old patterns and try new things. Then it can help the governing body, committees, and community of faith to do the same. The success of the team will lie in its ability to recognize issues that are impeding the community of faith's life, deal with them in its own functioning, and then lead the community of faith to recognize and address those patterns of behaviour and take appropriate actions to change them.

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## Transition Team's Tasks

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(Once the intentional interim minister arrives, they are part of the team.)

### A. Recruitment and Appointment

- Establish initial transition team structure with regional council representative(s).
- Name a team representative to the community of faith's governing body.
- Write a position description for the intentional interim minister (see the appendix for samples).
- Recruit, interview, select, and recommend an intentional interim minister to the governing body and the regional council.
- Plan for the intentional interim minister's arrival.
- Educate the community of faith, especially its staff, about the incoming minister's responsibilities.
- Brief the intentional interim minister for quick entry into the community of faith.
- Welcome and introduce the intentional interim minister into the community of faith.
- With the regional council, plan and assist with a covenanting service.

### B. Team Building

- Get to know one another, what each person brings to the team, choose a chair.
- Clarify values, purpose, and commitment.
- Lay a spiritual foundation for your work.
- Establish norms such as cooperation, decision-making procedures, and confidentiality.

### C. Planning

- If your community of faith has a motto, list of values, or mission statement, consider its relationship to the work ahead.
- Refine the preliminary goals.
- Draft a preliminary long-term schedule, including a tentative date for starting the search process.
- Establish initial meeting frequency (perhaps twice a month for the first year).
- Establish relationships with other bodies in the community of faith, especially the governing body and the M&P Committee.

### D. Relating to the Community of Faith

- Recognize and manage anxiety and resistance.
- Regularly communicate with the governing body and the community of faith to keep them informed and involved.

### E. Community of Faith Gatherings

- Convey information and collect input.
- Analyze the system and respond appropriately.



**F. Transition Tasks (Focus Points) and Goals**

- Develop and implement plans for the community of faith to work on the goals.
- Work on the focus points for interim ministry with the community of faith.
- Be leaders in change.

**G. Reviews**

- Regularly take stock of how things are going and of the team's own well-being.
- Report progress on goals to the governing body and the community of faith.
- Complete a mid-term review for the regional council.

**H. Evaluation and Reporting**

- Review and evaluate the transition work.
- Conduct evaluations of the interim ministry and the intentional interim minister.
- Write and submit final reports to the regional council.
- Make recommendations to the governing body.

**I. Disengagement and Closure**

- Present a final report to the community of faith.
- With the M&P Committee, facilitate farewells to the intentional interim minister.
- Bring the transition team to a close; members will often take other leadership positions to assist in integrating changes.
- Celebrate new beginnings with the community of faith.

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## A. Recruitment and Appointment

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The first major task for the transition team is to function as a search team to recruit an intentional interim minister. The process is as follows:

### Write a Position Description for the Intentional Interim Minister

The position description should include

- usual elements of a position description for ministry personnel, as outlined in [Pastoral Relations: Guidelines for a Community of Faith Profile](#)
- the initial interim goals
- the extent of other expected pastoral duties (being aware that the primary work of the intentional interim minister is transformation and their involvement in the areas of Christian education, outreach, pastoral care, and so on will be limited.)
- the formal Terms of Appointment (Intentional interim ministers have specialized skills and training, so the minimum salary is at least 10 percent above the minimum for the applicable category. If they are not relocating for the appointment, additional compensation for commuting is normally paid [as a taxable benefit].)

There will be inevitable pressure to accept other duties, but the minister's time must be managed so that the work of transition has priority. The position description also provides criteria for the final evaluation of the intentional interim minister.

### Recruit and Interview Potential Ministers

Your position description will be posted on the ChurchHub. You can also search there for eligible applicants. The Office of Vocation maintains a list of designated intentional interim ministers. Due to demand, the number of qualified ministers may be limited. Ministers who are not on the list may still be eligible if they have suitable skills and they agree to take accepted interim ministry training as a condition of appointment. If someone is appointed who is not designated as an intentional interim minister, then the appointment is classified as a supply appointment. Once the training is completed and the minister is designated as an intentional interim minister, the regional council can reclassify it as an intentional interim ministry appointment. In this situation, the goals for the interim ministry are still set and a transition team is still established.

Guidance for interviewing and selection can be found in [Pastoral Relations: Guidelines for Search and Selection](#), including how to complete the appointment form in ChurchHub.

The community of faith is required to make an annual payment to the United Church's Interim Ministry Sabbatical Fund. The rest of the compensation package is as it would be for an appointed minister.

## **Educate about the Intentional Interim Minister's Role and Responsibilities**

The intentional interim minister does not have the same position description as a called or regularly appointed minister. The focus is transition work. Everyone, particularly the office administrator, other staff, key volunteers, and members of the governing body must be advised of and understand the limits of the intentional interim minister's responsibility and availability.

Making arrangements to cover pastoral duties not included in the intentional interim minister's position description is the responsibility of the Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee and the governing body. The M&P Committee needs to be prepared to respond to pressure from the community of faith for the minister to add other duties to their workload.

Volunteers can be recruited to assume some responsibilities such as pastoral visiting, children and youth programming, and so on. It is helpful to identify other ministers who are available for critical pastoral needs, especially if the intentional interim minister is commuting from a distance, and while they are settling in and getting oriented.

## **Welcome and Brief the Intentional Interim Minister**

The intentional interim minister needs to be thoroughly briefed for a quick entry. They will need the order of worship, events calendar, recent minutes of the governing body and annual general meeting, statements of church policy, constitution and bylaws, and any other relevant documents. While the M&P Committee may help the new minister physically settle in, the transition team facilitates introductions to staff, the executive of the governing body, lay leaders, and other key people.

## **Participate in an Act of Covenant**

The entry of the intentional interim minister into the community of faith's life is formalized in an Act of Covenant. The covenanting service is conducted by the regional council. The transition team assists with arranging and leading the service and is included in the covenanting.

## **Prepare for the Transition Team Work**

Once the intentional interim minister is in place, the transition team considers what skills and experience it needs for the work ahead. To meet these needs, new people may be added with the approval of the governing body. Before the transition team begins the bulk of their work, it may be necessary for some people to be asked to step down from the team.

Training of the transition team will be necessary. Often this training is led by the intentional minister, but the training could also be led by regional council staff.

When all parties—that is, the intentional interim minister, the regional council representative(s), and all the community of faith's members—are in place on the transition team, the real work of the interim ministry begins. The first step is developing the relationships within the team itself, with the governing body, and with other groups within the community of faith.

## B. Team Building

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*Intentional interim ministers* are trained to help communities of faith take risks to transform themselves. They know the ways a community of faith can get stuck or be fearful, and they bring tools for navigating transitions practically, spiritually, and biblically. Change is disorienting, but you are not alone.

*Members of the team from the community of faith* also bring special knowledge to the work of transition. They know the rhythms of the community of faith's life—its customs, rituals, and practices. They have stories from the past that explain certain things in the present, and they know about sensitivities that are bound to elicit reaction. They can help the minister be aware of seemingly insignificant issues by explaining the political realities of the community of faith.

*The regional council representative(s)* bring an outside perspective, a sense of the relationship between the community of faith and the wider church, and a knowledge of church policy to the work. They may not attend every meeting but will need to receive the minutes and be present, virtually or in person, for significant decisions.

As all the members of the team interact, they learn from one another, see from one another's perspectives, collaborate, and come to know the community of faith better.

### Clarifying Team Values and Mission

The team learns about the interim work, the skills each member brings to it, and the time and energy they will be expected to commit. To do the work well, the team needs to establish the principles and values for their work together. They must each feel that they can speak freely and honestly on important issues so that a climate of trust is created. They will play a pivotal role in the community of faith's next stages.

An effective transition team

- is concerned for the health of the community of faith
- is one where all members attend and participate at meetings
- agrees on what a “good and sufficient” outcome will be
- agrees on decision-making processes and commits to them
- reflects spiritually regularly
- regularly and honestly reviews its working relationship
- commits to work through conflict both within the team and in the community of faith
- keeps confidentiality

The community of faith will be anxious for the transition team to report what it is doing. However, the team must do its own work first so that members understand their role, the work ahead, and the need for mutual support.

## Creating and Maintaining a Cooperative Team Climate

Most transition teams feel a positive urgency to get on with the interim tasks. First, though, the team must develop trust and support for one another. A retreat or more frequent meetings may help build the team more quickly, intentionally, and prayerfully.

Energy and commitment over the long haul require that team members be able to support one another, especially when the going gets tough. To maintain team wellness, each meeting must have time for spiritual and personal reflection. A team is more productive where action is rooted in faith, authenticity, and cooperation.

The question: How are we doing as a team? should be asked in regular reviews of the team's meetings, work, schedule, and communications. When there is dissension or conflict in the transition team, it must be resolved, or it will have a negative impact. A protocol for handling conflict should be agreed to before the need arises. The transition team can be an example for the community of how effective committees function, and how to manage and resolve differences.

As transition leaders, the members of the transition team must be clear and consistent about their collective purpose. When the team works together, the spiritual enlivening that results fills the whole community of faith.

## Decision Making

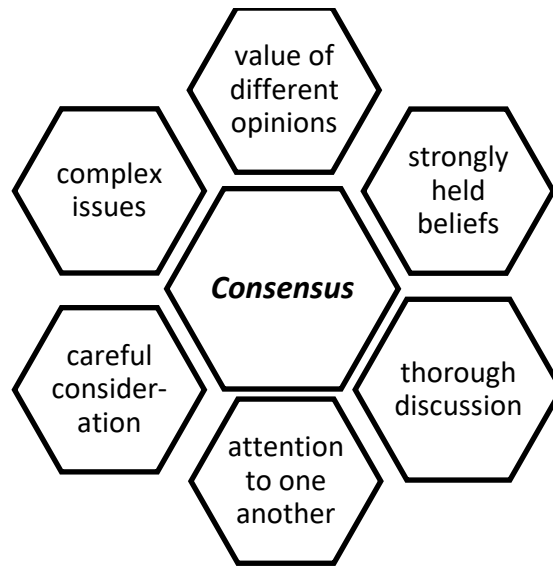
A community of faith may have unexamined expectations and habits that impact its decision-making ability. The way decisions are made is one of the key factors that cause a community of faith to become conflicted and to lose trust.

We know how decision making can go wrong:

- One side wins and the other loses.
- A group is perceived as the inner circle.
- There is a lack of consistency between one situation and another.
- Decisions are asked for and made without sufficient information.
- Decisions are made without involving the affected parties.
- There is a lack of follow-through and monitoring.
- Decisions are reversed when someone gets upset.
- Numerous other causes.

In order for the transition team to nudge the community of faith out of ineffective habits and into solid decision making, it first has to be able to do so in its own functioning. Ask, "To what extent do we invite and consider one another's points of view, and work out our differences, before we make a decision? To what extent do we honour one another and listen for God's call?"

Transition teams usually make decisions by consensus.



The decision may not be everyone's first choice but is one they can accept. The transition team's decisions must be properly recorded in meeting minutes.

### Confidentiality and Transparency

For the Transition Team to build a relationship of trust with the community of faith, three components are essential: privacy, confidentiality, and transparency.

- *Privacy* belongs to one individual only. Most people are aware of the importance of respecting the right to privacy, that is, of honouring an individual's control over how and with whom personal information can be shared. This right is protected by Canadian law in the Personal Information and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). For the transition team, this means that if people's names are used in documentation or public display, each person must first give permission.
- *Confidentiality* means ensuring that information gained in private discussion is not disclosed to others inappropriately or used out of context. To maintain trust and the integrity of a process, it can be necessary to withhold some information. Confidentiality is a required condition for participants of certain groups to ensure that what is said in the group stays in the group. This enables people to speak freely about private or controversial issues without being held to account beyond the group and context where the words are spoken. At the end of each meeting, decide what will be shared with whom.
- *Transparency* means that methods and procedures are clear and open and can be questioned. It operates on the democratic principle that people have a right to know about the systems that affect their well-being. It means that people will know and have a say in how information is used, who sees it, and how it fits into the larger picture. It supports the principle of keeping a community of faith well informed about the transition work.

Secrecy, on the other hand, will impede trust. *Secrecy* is the opposite of transparency. It is the condition of withholding information for the purpose of control. It is a situation in which only a few initiates are privy to certain information and everyone else is excluded, whether or not the information could potentially affect them. When people suspect, rightly or wrongly, that a few “insiders” are making decisions for others, mistrust can take hold.

When people are anxious that something is going on that has the potential to upset or harm them, they may regard others with suspicion and confuse secrecy and confidentiality. Some matters that are discussed must be kept confidential within the team. Consequently, it is very important that the team communicates its intentions and processes clearly and conducts its work transparently.

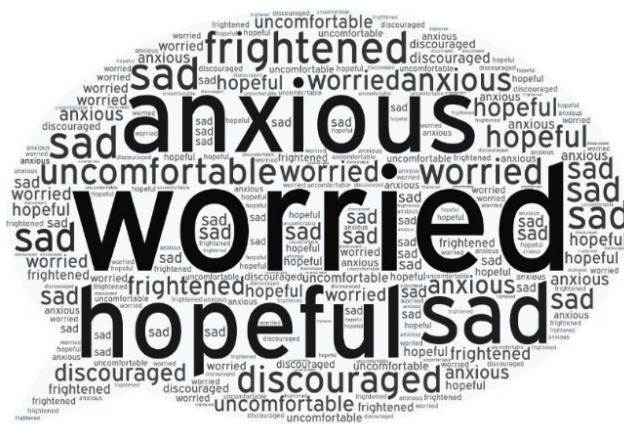
Without breaching the confidentiality of its meetings and private conversations, the team can share its

- values and mission
- decision-making processes
- timelines
- reasons for doing things a certain way
- results of research or surveys

Since they will deal with sensitive and controversial issues, team members must each commit to confidentiality. This means that the chair, or another designated person, is the team’s single public voice. Unless agreed otherwise for certain purposes, other members must commit themselves to making only general and positive comments about the team and its work.

### Team Building as Experiential Learning

The transition team will lead the way not only in the interim tasks but also in the experience of transition. How do we feel facing change, differences, challenge, and controversy? Do we feel uncomfortable or even anxious? Discouraged? Frightened, sad, or worried? Hopeful perhaps?



Naming, sharing, and exploring these feelings helps the team understand what others will also be going through and what will help and hinder them through the transition process. It will also deepen trust of one another.

### **Chairing the Team**

A member of the team from the community of faith is usually the chair. Sometimes the regional council representative chairs while the search for an Intentional Interim Minister is being conducted and sometimes, once in place, the Intentional Interim Minister chairs the first meeting or two.

- The chair leads the meetings and with the Intentional Interim Minister sets the agenda.
- The chair is fully involved in the discussions and decision-making of the team.
- The chair is normally the spokesperson for the Transition Team to the community of faith and presents the Transition Team's work, process, and recommendations.
- The chair is not necessarily the Transition Team representative to the governing body.



## C. Planning

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### Redefine the Initial Interim Goals

The governing body, normally with the help of the regional council, will have set initial goals, naming issues that the community of faith must address during the interim ministry. These may need to be pared down to a realistic number. They are probably stated in broad terms. The transition team must reshape these broad goals into specific, practical ones for a common understanding of the work ahead.

For example, an initial goal for the interim might be “to bring unity to the community of faith by resolving longstanding conflicts.” The transition team has to identify what conflicts exist and clarify the meaning of unity. Is it a question of theology, internal politics, or the use of the kitchen? Once the issue is defined more specifically, a suitable strategy and an appropriate amount of time can be assigned to deal with it.

To clarify the interim goals, the team might use questions such as these:

- What is this issue really about, and how does it show itself?
- Is there a primary place where this issue originates? How widespread is it?
- Whom does this issue affect, and how?
- Who must be included when seeking solutions?
- What will be different in the community of faith’s life if this goal is met?

As issues continue to emerge, the transition team needs to prioritize regularly. As one presenting problem is discussed, the team may find that similar patterns become apparent in other, seemingly unrelated situations, and that its focus must shift. At the same time, the team will not want to get diverted by every problem and detail.

One of the most important things the transition team must do is determine how it will know if its goals have been reached. What achievements will indicate satisfactory outcomes? “What do we intend to do?” is the initial question. The next is “What indicators will tell us how well we’ve done it?” The specific outcomes are the baseline for evaluating the interim ministry and will guide the community of faith into its future.

Remember:

- Change takes time, especially for institutions and where deep beliefs and values are held.
- The interim ministry will not resolve every issue that emerges.
- Notice unhelpful patterns and limiting, short-sighted behaviours, and replace them with healthier, more functional practices.
- A goal is to build adaptability into the fabric of the community of faith’s life.

## Manage Time

A tentative timeline should be created as early as possible to guide how the interim work will unfold. The ongoing life of the community of faith and responsibilities of the intentional interim minister will need to be taken into account. Sometimes it is helpful to work backward from the time required for the search process. While unexpected issues will arise, an overall schedule will help the team stay on track. A sample timeline can be found in the Appendix.

## Set the Schedule for Meetings

Because the work is intense and time-limited, transition teams meet frequently. Adequate time must be given to team building and planning at the beginning of the interim. After that, some teams will meet every two weeks for most of two years; others might meet monthly with sub-committee or work group meetings in-between. It is best to schedule meetings season-by-season rather than meeting-by-meeting so that everyone can make them a priority.

Meetings of the transition team must include the intentional interim minister and at least three of the community of faith members. Regional council representatives may not attend every meeting. However, they are expected to receive the minutes and one is required for significant decisions, including recommending initiating formal updating of the community of faith profile and the search process. They are expected to contribute to midterm and final reports and evaluations. They may attend in person, electronically, or by conference call.

## Establish Relationships

- *With the governing body:* A representative of the transition team, often the chair, and the intentional interim minister become part of the governing body and report regularly on the team's work. The governing body has a responsibility to learn about the transition process and to be involved in the interim work. Its support and participation help the community of faith trust what is happening. After the interim time, this commitment will help ensure that the transition initiatives take hold in the life of the community of faith.
- *With the Ministry and Personnel Committee:* With an intentional interim minister, the role of the M&P Committee is somewhat different than its role with a regularly called or appointed minister. The tasks and focus of the interim ministry are overseen and monitored by the transition team. The M&P Committee relates to the intentional interim minister for specific pastoral relations issues, including vacation and continuing education, and regarding relationships with other staff and volunteer leaders. In some interim situations, the committee may be called on to assist with managing conflict. However, the intentional interim minister does not have the same accountability to the M&P Committee that ministry personnel normally would have.

The M&P Committee first needs to understand that the position description of the intentional interim minister is different from that of a regularly called or appointed minister. The committee can then provide support by clarifying the differences for the governing body and the community of faith.

With less direct responsibility for the minister, an interim ministry is often a time for the M&P Committee to evaluate and strengthen its own functioning and effectiveness for a healthy pastoral relationship in the future.

- *Within the community of faith:* The effectiveness of the transition team's work depends on strong relationships with key committees and other groups. The better these groups know and understand the interim strategy, the better they will be able to support the work of transition.

## D. Relating to the Community of Faith

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### Transition Team as Facilitator and Teacher

For interim ministry to be transformational, the community of faith must accept the work as its own. If interim ministry was entered into reluctantly or is seen as imposed, the natural response is resistance, which the transition team will need to address. For the community of faith to choose well for its future, it will need to practise, experiment, and learn new skills and behaviours. While the transition team may be aware of problems, its principal role is not to fix them but rather to act as a catalyst, facilitator, and teacher.

### Manage Anxiety

Some anxiety is required for a system to change. However, if there is too much anxiety, people will be reluctant to give up what is familiar. To make room for new initiatives, the transition team can support people in the community of faith to accept their losses and acknowledge their fears. It is not enough to offer reassurance and to explain the wisdom of change. It is of more help to create the kind of community where people know it is safe to express their hopes and fears and feel that they are not alone. Being deeply heard helps people develop the trust that makes it safe to try new things.

The Bible is full of stories of people moving through difficult times, taking risks, and finding new life and hope.

### Recognize and Manage Resistance

Even the most sensitive handling of change will not prevent all opposition.

What might provoke such resistance?

- opening old wounds
- digging up and naming secrets
- uncovering hidden agendas
- surfacing unpopular issues from the past or in the present

What form might resistance take?

- Scapegoating: blaming someone or something in order to divert attention away from the real pain. This might be directed at the transition team or the intentional interim minister.
- Influential people may fade into the background for the duration of the interim period, then re-emerge and reassert themselves after it ends.
- A former minister or leader may use old alliances to undermine the credibility of the transition team (even without formal leadership positions, they may still wield considerable influence).

What should the transition team take note of?

- evidence of resistance
- those who do not participate in the interim discussions or meetings
- rumours and parking lot conversations
- subtle or not-so-subtle attempts to divide members of the transition team
- attempts to influence team members against the intentional interim minister

How can the transition team respond?

- Listen to and recognize the fears, concerns, angry words, and grief; seek to understand.
- Speak to the individuals personally and directly, and find out what they need.
- Develop strategies to defuse their opposition or neutralize their influence.
- If a former minister appears to be working against the team, call on the regional council.
- Always work in ways that are transparent, invitational, and energizing.
- Communicate frequently and clearly to the whole community of faith.

What does the transition team need to do for itself?

- Recognize that such work is difficult and may make team members anxious too.
- Openly discuss frustrations to keep trust in one another.
- Be centred spiritually, pause for prayer, and trust the Spirit with and among you.
- Offer one another care, encouragement, and words of hope.
- Deal with and clear resistance when it occurs to release energy for growth and renewal.
- Take time to keep the team healthy and have some fun together.

### **Communicate, Communicate, Communicate**

For adults to learn, they need to be able to integrate new information with what they already know and with their past experience. That requires

- concrete examples
- hearing material more than once
- talking about it and asking questions
- figuring out how the change will benefit them

Children, teens, and young adults should also be included in discussions. A single youth representative on an adult committee is neither effective nor fair. Facilitated and age-appropriate discussions in peer groups can be one way to tap into the creativity, concerns, and ideas of young people. Using social media is another.

For those with long personal and family histories in the church, changing the way things are done may be especially difficult. Some seniors may experience change as one more loss at a time when they most need stability and support. Resistance is one way these feelings of loss and attachment may be expressed. Good pastoral care with opportunities to grieve can help them be open to new possibilities.

## E. Community of Faith Gatherings

### Gathering and Communicating Information

The transition team should try to use a variety of methods to collect information.

- Surveys: require careful construction to get accurate information, and may not be returned.
- Large group meetings: participants need confidence to speak out in front of others.
- Small group meetings: require planned facilitation.

### Planning Group Meetings

- Be clear about what the transition team wants participants to take away.
- Deliver your message in short sections with time for discussion and for participants to relate what you are saying to their own experience.
- Encourage the expression of different and contrary opinions.
- Take notes so the team can go back to the information and opinions offered.
- Give a summary of what you have heard so participants know you have listened.
- Describe what the follow-up and next steps will be.

### Ask Useful Questions

Do	Don't	Example
Make sure people in the target group have direct knowledge of what is being asked.	Ask untargeted questions too widely.	Ask those who bring children about children's programming.
Construct questions that ask about personal experience.	Ask for general opinions or judgments. Ask for likes or dislikes.	In worship, describe the parts you find uplifting. What else would help you maintain your spiritual focus?

### Document the Discussion

Make sure the information gained from a gathering or meeting is documented and given back as soon as possible to the group that produced it. The results of whatever dialogue has taken place are to be recorded, summarized, and made public so everyone knows they have been heard, their input is valued, and what has been said has been recorded accurately.

### Identify the Real Issues

When the team reviews what the community of faith has said, it will probably discover that the issues fall into clusters, such as worship, declining membership, or decision making. The impulse may be to regard these as indicators of what to fix. However, consider these points:

- These problems require more than a technical fix. They require adaptive solutions, which take creativity, experimentation, and new learning. Here is a 10-minute

introduction to the difference between technical and adaptive problems: [Ronald Heifetz on Adaptive Leadership](#) (YouTube.com; search “nature of adaptive leadership.”)

- What is visible on the surface may be symptomatic of an underlying, deeper difficulty at heart.

So what is the transition team to do?

- Listen with curiosity, look for patterns, and dig beneath the obvious.
- Reflect, pray, and discern individually and as a group; have patience.
- Be open to being mistaken, and be open to hard and even painful truths.

You will make unexpected and surprising discoveries and experience the moving of the Spirit. From that, the transition team can plan ways to help the community of faith come to their own realizations and insights.

### **Choose What to Respond To**

The transition team may discover blocks that are preventing change and be able to deal with them fairly directly. Others will require more time to dislodge, perhaps beyond the interim ministry, and include more people. The transition team’s focus is on facilitating transition so that the community of faith becomes accustomed to dealing with and resolving issues as they occur.

## F. The Focus Points of Transitional Ministry

### The Work of the Community of Faith During the Interim Time

Each community of faith sets unique goals for the interim time. There is also work that every transitional ministry has in common, known as “Focus Points”: Heritage, Leadership, Mission, Connections, and Future. These Focus Points were developed by the Center for Congregational Health and are foundational in the training offered by the Interim Ministry Network, the organization that trains most intentional interim ministers both in The United Church of Canada and internationally.

The Focus Points are not a linear progression. Each one will be revisited multiple times throughout the interim, with deepening understanding. The image of a spiral conveys this concept.

#### Heritage

The past shapes the present. The successes and challenges a community of faith has faced teach it how to act. Often the transition team will lead a story-telling event or gather people in homes to share the memories of long-time members and to welcome newcomers into the traditions. Heritage recovery is a helpful way for the intentional interim minister and the team to learn about the community of faith. The mood can be fun and celebratory.

#### Leadership

Leadership means reviewing needs, organizational structure, and development of effective and new leadership.

What leadership is needed at this time?	During the interim ministry, some new leaders will emerge, and some experienced leaders may decide to commit to new directions.
What is not working?	The system may be predisposed to maintaining old patterns.
What organizational structure is needed?	The team will work to open up the system and encourage updating the administration.
What will be the response?	Changes may be welcomed when they make things run more smoothly. Where there are particular sensitivities, change will be slower and may extend beyond the interim time.
Where will new leaders come from?	Leaders will come from the pool of people who have become excited by the possibilities that have emerged. Offer them mentoring, opportunities, and thanks.
What might happen to the new initiatives after the interim time?	Systems naturally try to revert back to the way things were. Some of those opposed to the changes may attempt to reassert their leadership and undermine the interim work.



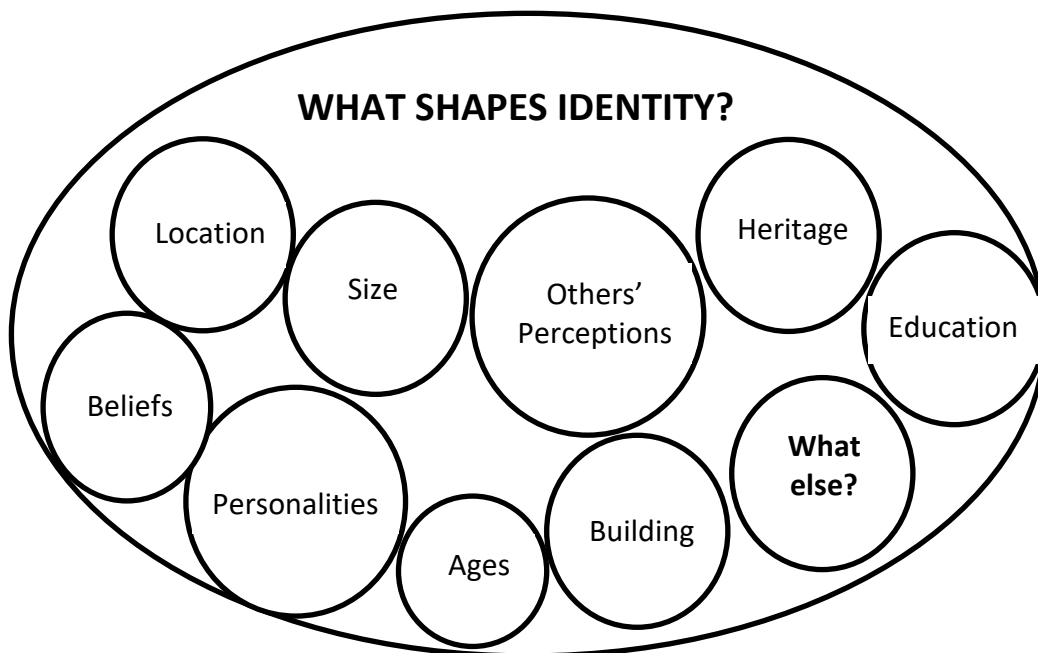
What will help the changes stick?	Ongoing reinforcement and support beyond the interim ministry will be required.
What does the transition team need to do?	One or two members should be directly involved with developing/updating the community of faith profile and search process so that their work is integrated into future plans.
After the interim ministry period, how can the transition team support the new minister?	Perhaps a team member might join the M&P Committee. The team's wisdom can assist the governing body with helping the new minister carry the transformation forward.

**Mission**

Mission involves defining or redefining values and purpose. This focus point has two components: Identity and Purpose.

**Identity**

Each United Church has a unique character, shaped by location, size, beliefs, and other factors, that has been formed by its context and history.



Just like in a family though, each person would describe the community of faith differently. Finding common ground among these descriptions will help answer, "Who are we now?"

The work on heritage will have surfaced some characteristics. Now, the transition team explores ways to go deeper, and to name core values.

## Purpose

An upside-down way of thinking about purpose is to ask: What difference would it make if our community of faith wasn't here? Or more positively: How are we making a difference in our community, in the lives of those who are part of it, and in the world?

## Identity + Purpose = Mission

Knowing its identity and purpose, the community of faith has a clearer self-understanding, making it better able to respond to needs and challenges. Interim ministers often use three questions, from Gil Rendle and Alice Mann's *Holy Conversations*, to guide a community of faith in defining its mission:

1. Who are we?
2. Who is our neighbour?
3. What is God calling us to do and be?

At one time, a lot of energy was put into crafting a mission statement—which was often unwieldy and easily forgotten. Naming core values and purpose in a few easily recalled words is more effective.

## Connections

The interim period is a time to reconnect the community of faith with its larger community: the neighbourhood, service agencies, and schools; organizations and communities of faith of other denominations and religions; other United Churches, ministries, and the regional council; and the work of the United Church and its partners nationally and globally, including through Mission & Service.

If the community of faith has been going through difficulties, its relationship with the regional council may be strained. The transition team connects to the regional council through its representative(s) on the transition team. The support they give the team can be highlighted so the whole community is aware of their positive impact.

## Future

Preparing for the future involves developing or updating the community of faith profile. Keeping the initiatives from the interim time is vital. Communities of faith have a tendency to revert to old habits at the conclusion of the interim period. Key leaders and the newly called minister must commit to the new direction.

## G. Reviews

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### Purpose of Reviews

A review checks a work in progress to identify strengths and weaknesses so that adjustments can be made. Reviews of the interim work should happen regularly to help keep everyone on track. Review are different from evaluations, which will take place at the end.

### Using Reviews

The transition team should regularly ask how the work is going, how people feel about it, and what's happening. A review can also be done after a workshop or formal presentation. Simply ask, "Were our goals for the event met? What helped? What hindered? What would we do differently next time?" Ensure that everyone involved (or at least a representative sample) has the opportunity to respond to these questions. Insights gained in a review can help make subsequent activity more productive, reveal modifications needed to the original plans, or help with strategy for dealing with contentious issues.

A mid-term review halfway through the interim period will assess how far the community of faith has come in meeting its goals and how well the work of the transition team is progressing.

*The transition team's own functioning* should be checked regularly too. Some questions to ask one another are the following:

- How are we doing as a team?
- How satisfied is each of us with the work we are doing?
- What is our relationship like with the community of faith?
- What have we learned that we can use to make the next steps work better?
- Is our energy holding up, or what do we need to do to renew it?

Reviews check that the team itself is functioning well and that the work is progressing as it should be. Equally, an issue may surface that the whole community of faith needs to address.

### Timing for Community of Faith Profile and Search Process

About halfway through the interim ministry (early in the second year of a two-year interim), the transition team reviews whether or not the community of faith has clearly identified and claimed its mission. If it has, the transition team informs the governing body and the regional council that the time has come to update the community of faith profile and to initiate the search process. One or two members of the transition team will normally be part of the process to ensure continuity of knowledge and vision.

If the community of faith is not ready, the transition team has to resist pressure from those who are impatient to get on with the search for a new minister. The transition team has to balance the time necessary for the search process to be completed with the readiness of the community of faith to proceed.

## H. Evaluation and Reporting

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### Scope and Purpose of the Final Evaluations

A final evaluation of the transition work is to be completed at least 60 days before the end of the interim ministry and is sent to the regional council. It describes how effectively the community of faith's goals have been met and what follow-up may be needed.

An evaluation of the intentional interim minister is also completed and sent to the regional council for comments and for forwarding to the Office of Vocation.

The final evaluations are carried out by the transition team (including the intentional interim minister). They will include the governing body, and may engage the M&P Committee, staff, and the community of faith.

For the transition team and the community of faith, the evaluations are an opportunity to

- assess how much progress has been made on each of the goals
- affirm accomplishments and learnings
- note areas that need to be strengthened or completed
- plan for the future so changes that have been made will be sustained

### Participatory Evaluation Process

Participation in evaluating the interim ministry allows the community of faith to reflect on its progress toward the goals, to share personal and collective experiences, and to commit to continuing the work begun during the interim period. A well-designed evaluation will help the community of faith strengthen *connections*, acknowledge its *heritage*, affirm its *mission*, and be more aware of next stages for the *future* and the *leadership* it needs.

If the transition team chooses to conduct a participatory evaluation, it is helpful to consult the governing board regarding the process, questions, and issues to be considered. Giving people the questions ahead of time lets them consider how they want to respond and talk about their ideas with others.

Participatory evaluation is usually done in group discussions with a moderator taking notes. The transition team may also wish to use a general questionnaire to solicit responses from as many people as possible. (Note that this is not a scientific survey.)

### Timing for Final Evaluations

#### Four Months before the End of the Interim

- Gather minutes, reports, and the intentional interim minister's reports, and review them.
- Remember the stories, and celebrate all that has been done.

- Review the goals that were set for the interim ministry. List the possible achievements for each goal, and collect both quantitative and qualitative data to show what has happened.
- Determine what additional feedback will be collected and how: meeting(s), focus groups, individual interviews (e.g., of key leaders), a questionnaire. Plan how results will be gathered and interpreted.
- If input into the work of the intentional interim minister is being invited beyond the transition team and the M&P Committee, determine what policies need to be in place to ensure that privacy and confidentiality are respected.
- Confer with the governing body on the evaluation process.

### Three Months before the End of the Interim

- Conduct evaluation events and interviews, compile results, and draw conclusions.
- Share with participants (as appropriate), the governing body, and staff. Allow opportunity for feedback.
- Share results and conclusions of the intentional interim minister's evaluation with them. Ask for their feedback.

### Two Months before the End of the Interim

#### Final Report of the Interim Ministry

From the materials collected and the results of evaluation discussions (and questionnaires), write the final report. It should include responses to the following:

1. What were the reasons for having interim ministry, and how is the community of faith different now? What are the learnings?
2. What were the goals? What work was done on each? What were the main accomplishments? What remains incomplete, and why?
3. What new issues or challenges have emerged, and what are the plans for addressing them?
4. Does the community of faith have a clearer sense of mission, identity and purpose? If so, how did this come about? If not, what got in the way?
5. How has interim ministry impacted the health and spiritual life of the community of faith?
6. Are there any recommendations for the future? Is there anything else you would like to share?

Please keep the length of the report to no more than 5–6 pages. Write the report so that those from the regional council and the Office of Vocation who are not familiar with your circumstances will be able to understand it. Convey as accurate a picture as possible. Share the final report with the governing body, staff, community of faith, and intentional interim minister. Send a copy to the regional council, which will then forward a copy to the Office of Vocation.

The intentional interim minister may also prepare a final report, not exceeding 5–6 pages.

## **Evaluation of the Intentional Interim Minister**

See *The Manual, 2021*, Pastoral Relations section I.1.10.6.

The evaluation of the intentional interim minister is focused on their work in leading the transition team and the community of faith to achieve the interim ministry goals. Input will be primarily from the transition team. Feedback from the governing body, staff, and the community of faith may be received during the evaluation of the interim ministry or may be sought.

1. How did the intentional interim minister assist the community of faith with its goals?
2. How would you, as a member of the transition team, describe the relationship between the community of faith and the intentional interim minister? Illustrate briefly with an example.
3. What strengths did the intentional interim minister bring to the work? What might have been done differently? What skills or knowledge do you recommend they develop further?
4. Do you have any other comments pertinent to this minister's functioning as an intentional interim minister?

Once a report is drafted, the intentional interim minister and the rest of the transition team discuss whether it is balanced, thorough, and justified by the facts. Once they agree, the report is finalized. The Office of Vocation will use the report to make appropriate recommendations regarding the designation of intentional interim minister.

The evaluation is sent to the regional council to forward to the Office of Vocation. Due to confidentiality, it is not shared with anyone else without the permission of the intentional interim minister. Sometimes it is agreed that the governing body, or its executive, and the M&P Committee will receive copies.

# I. Disengagement and Closure

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## **After the Reports Have Been Submitted**

After submitting the reports, the transition team will continue to work with the community of faith to sustain the learning from the interim time. The team has driven the mission during the interim time. That responsibility is now handed back to the governing body for it to carry forward with next steps. As part of the search process, any new ministry personnel should be briefed on the mission and plans that have emerged.

## **Bringing the Interim Ministry to a Close**

By the last month of the interim ministry, the community of faith will experience the shift from the transition work of the interim ministry to the new mission. The intentional interim minister will be disengaging from the community of faith, vacating the office, and saying goodbye. It is time to draw an end to the interim ministry. Doing this well is important for the future. Celebrate with a special service, a community gathering, a potluck dinner, or some combination of formal and informal observances. Acknowledge what has been accomplished, thank the leaders publicly, and express appreciation to the community of faith for its participation.

## **Disbanding the Transition Team**

The transition team's work finishes as the community of faith says goodbye to the intentional interim minister and shifts its energy from the transition process to its future ministry. Members of the transition team will likely continue in leadership roles, formally or informally, on the governing body and on other key committees. Their continuing leadership will be valuable to ensuring that initiatives taken in the interim ministry period are put into practice. The disbanding can also be a time to express gratitude, as individuals and as a team, for your leadership during the transition process.

## Intentional Interim Ministry Policy

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The policy for Intentional Interim Ministry is outlined in The Manual I.1.10:

### **I.1.10.1 Meaning**

The purpose of “interim ministry” is to work toward specific goals decided on by the community of faith and regional council. An interim ministry is a time-limited ministry in a community of faith.

An “intentional interim minister” is a member of the order of ministry or designated lay minister who has been designated by the Office of Vocation to serve in interim ministry.

### **I.1.10.2 Designation as Intentional Interim Minister**

The Office of Vocation may designate a member of the order of ministry or a designated lay minister as an intentional interim minister.

The Office of Vocation must be satisfied that the person

- a) has suitable skills and disposition for interim ministry; and
- b) has, or is taking, appropriate training and education for interim ministry.

The designation is valid for the duration of the initial appointment of the intentional interim minister.

### **I.1.10.3 Terms of Interim Ministry**

The regional council may approve a community of faith for interim ministry on the community of faith’s request, or in any case where the regional council decides that interim ministry is appropriate.

The regional council and community of faith must decide on

- a) the needs and goals for the interim ministry;
- b) the terms of the appointment; and
- c) the processes for accountability of the interim ministry during the appointment.

### **I.1.10.4 Transition Team**

The search for an intentional interim minister is conducted by a transition team. This team consists of

- a) one or two representatives of the regional council, elected by the regional council; and
- b) four to six representatives of the community of faith, elected by the community of faith or its governing body. They must all be full members of the United Church and members of the community of faith.



#### **I.1.10.5 Appointment**

The process for appointing an intentional interim minister to the pastoral charge is set out below. The transition team, community of faith governing body, and regional council are each responsible for completing the steps of the process assigned to them.

- a) **Recruitment:** The transition team recruits an intentional interim minister and recommends their appointment to the community of faith governing body.
- b) **Recommendation:** The community of faith governing body recommends an intentional interim minister for the interim ministry to the regional council.
- c) **Decision:** The regional council makes a decision whether to appoint the intentional interim minister to the community of faith.

#### **I.1.10.6 Evaluation after Initial Appointment**

The Office of Vocation must evaluate the effectiveness of the intentional interim minister after the initial interim ministry appointment. The transition team submits evaluations of both the interim ministry and the intentional interim minister. If the Office of Vocation is satisfied that the person is effective as an intentional interim minister, the designation is continued. It is valid for as long as the intentional interim minister is in an interim ministry appointment and for five years thereafter. The Office of Vocation may remove the designation.

#### **I.1.10.7 Serving Community of Faith after Interim Ministry**

The intentional interim minister may not serve the community of faith in any call or appointment immediately after their appointment as intentional interim minister ends.

# Appendix

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### **Continuing Education**

The Intentional Interim Minister may:

- attend the annual conference of the Interim Ministry Network (IMN)
- take advantage of other IMN offerings
- require additional skills and knowledge to address the issues of this community of faith
- require coaching for which financial support will be provided

### **Denomination and Communities**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- be actively involved in the life of the regional council and/or General Council
- participate in the United Church of Canada's IIM community of practice

### **Faith Formation and Christian Education**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- provide Faith Formation opportunities in the meetings of the committees they attend
- be available as a resource for the Faith Formation committee
- not regularly attend their meetings or give hands-on leadership
- occasionally offer workshops as necessitated for meeting the interim goals

### **Leadership**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- encourage congregants to offer their gifts and leadership
- coach chairs of committees and the governing body
- offer strong leadership and direction to governing body
- educate our community of faith in good decision-making practices
- provide active support for the finance committee
- develop greater awareness of stewardship in the community of faith
- head the staff team and ensure they meet monthly

### **Pastoral Care**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- provide pastoral care for emergency situations of hospitalization, recent bereavement or other urgent needs
- conduct funerals for congregants and their immediate families
- offer semi-annual check-ins and training for the Pastoral Care Team who provide regular, on-going pastoral care to shut-ins, the bereavement group, and other congregants

### **Self-Care**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- maintain a healthy lifestyle physically, emotionally, spiritually and professionally
- be attentive to supportive personal and collegial relationships

- honour time for family, friends, personal and spiritual development, and renewal

### **Worship**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- conduct weekly and special services of worship with traditional, contemporary and praise music
- administer the sacraments of communion monthly and baptism according to our policy
- encourage and support lay participation and leadership in worship
- encourage experimentation in worship
- conduct wedding and funeral services for congregants
- regularly attend meetings of the Worship and Music committee

### **Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- be designated as an Intentional Interim Minister by The United Church of Canada
- have a valid driver's license and access to a vehicle

### **Other Preferred Assets**

It is preferred that the Intentional Interim Minister:

- be proficient with social media and technology to facilitate multimedia during the service and to communicate within the congregation and community

### **Time Allocation Guidelines (40 hour work week)**

The Intentional Interim Minister will spend one-quarter of their time on each of:

- tasks related to intentional interim ministry
- worship preparation
- leadership support and administration
- pastoral care, faith formation, and other aspects of ministry



### **Community Outreach and Social Justice - 10%**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- broaden our knowledge of local outreach projects and activities
- provide leadership in our transition goal of identifying and forming community partnerships

### **Continuing Education**

The Intentional Interim Minister may:

- attend the annual conference of the Interim Ministry Network (IMN)
- take advantage of other IMN offerings
- require coaching for which financial support will be provided

### **Denomination and Communities - 5%**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- be actively involved in the life of the regional council and/or General Council
- participate in the United Church of Canada's IIM community of practice

### **Faith Formation and Christian Education - 5%**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- occasionally offer workshops as necessitated for meeting the interim goals
- be available as a resource for the Faith Formation committee and for small group ministries

### **Leadership - 40%**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- work closely with the Transition Team to focus the initial general goals and identify specific goals for the Intentional Interim Ministry period
- identify internal and external resources to meet those goals; motivate and inspire congregants to contribute to goals
- provide leadership to the planning and implementation of initiatives related to meeting transition goals
- integrate transition into all areas and facets of ministry

### **Pastoral Care - 5%**

Most pastoral care and funerals are the responsibility of the pastoral care minister. The Intentional Interim Minister will assume urgent pastoral care in the pastoral care minister's absence. The Intentional Interim Minister will provide pastoral care to the members of the Transition Team and the governing body, particularly as related to the impacts of transition.

### **Self-Care**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- maintain a healthy lifestyle physically, emotionally, spiritually and professionally

### **Worship - 25%**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- normally lead worship 3 Sunday per month (except for vacation). The pastoral care minister will lead the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday and when there are 5 Sundays these will be lay led.
- encourage and support lay participation and leadership in worship
- administer the sacraments of communion monthly and baptism according to our policy
- Funerals and weddings will normally be conducted by the pastoral care minister

### **Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities**

The Intentional Interim Minister will:

- be designated as an Intentional Interim Minister by the United Church of Canada
- have a valid driver's license and access to a vehicle

### **Other Preferred Assets**

It is preferred that the Intentional Interim Minister:

- be proficient with social media and technology to facilitate multimedia during the service and to communicate within the congregation and community



## Sample Timeline

This timeline is a SAMPLE only. The actual time will be determined by the complexity of the situation and the goals. Completion of the interim is dependent on satisfactory completion of the goals.

	Pre IIMs Arrival	Months 1 - 4	Months 5 - 8	Months 9 - 12	Months 13 - 18	Months 19 - 24
<b>Recruitment</b>	Select TT & rep on G.B.	Team building - Chair & secretary (if not already)				
<b>IIM</b>	Prepare position description, interview, negotiate terms & appointment	Orient IIM & meet CoF			With TT, determine readiness for search	Exit interview & Closure (Break afterward if possible)
<b>Goals</b>	Make preliminary TT Goals	Refine goals & take to CoF	Develop strategies to implement goals	Goal implementation	Continue work on goals	Reinforce learnings & finish undone work
<b>Additional Items</b>	TT Training	Analyze scope of work & draft preliminary timeline			CoF begins work on profile	Search
<b>Communication</b>		Covenant IIM & TT	Regular reports to G.B.	Regularly to CoF & to AGM		
<b>Reviews &amp; Reports</b>			6-month review	12-month review & mid-term report to regional council		Final evaluations
<b>Rest</b>			Christmas or summer break	Christmas or summer break	Christmas or summer break	Celebrations & De-covenanting
<b>Usual Primary</b>	Focus Point (Ref. pp. 24 – 26)	Heritage (often will have event)	Leadership	Mission p. 25 & Connections	Future	