

## What happens after intentional interims?

By Bishop Jon Anderson,  
Southwest Minnesota Synod

When there is a pastoral transition a rich opportunity opens for a congregation to consider who God has called it to be in the past, what God has been up to in its current life, and where God is calling it in its future life, ministry and mission. It is also a time when the sins of under-functioning leadership (lay, staff or clergy), over-functioning leadership or dysfunctional leadership might be called to repent - or turn around. Intentional Interims bring a full toolbox of wisdom to this important transitional time.

If congregations do their work during this transition the odds of a successful pastorate in the next chapter of their life go up significantly.

If they avoid their work the patterns of the past continue and we can witness unfortunate next chapters. Intentional Interims shepherd the congregation through chapters of work in addressing their history, the way the congregation operates as a system, the anxiety that inevitably surfaces, discerning what type of leader would best serve the next chapter of their mission and ministry, while at the same time providing Word and sacrament ministry in a congregation's life.

Intentional Interims see their calling as more than just a care-taking ministry. Intentional Interims work as their title implies to guide an intentional transition time for the sake of the Gospel. They are willing to stir things up when the system needs to do some difficult work or is struggling to dream. They challenge the power system if it is dysfunctional. They also help the congregation learn and explore new ways of approaching ministry so that new leadership can bring new ideas into the congregation's life.

There are no silver bullets in ministry, but trained

intentional interims are one significant resource God has called to enrich and deepen the ministry and mission of congregations. They move the focus off of survival and anxiety towards the key question, "What is God's preferred future for our congregation?"



**Bishop Jon V. Anderson**  
[jon.anderson@ecunet.org](mailto:jon.anderson@ecunet.org)

---

## From the president...

Colleagues and supporters of Interim Ministry,

Amid the preparations for stewardship campaigns, Reformation services and Advent planning, May seems far distant. But memories of the 2006 NALIP Annual Conference linger. Presenter Luther Snow was well tuned in to interim dynamics. With grace, humor and skill he led us in identifying and connecting resources in a positive and practical way – even in the apparently “needy” fictional congregational we described. I could immediately foresee the benefits of his approach in a church seeking a missional direction – congregation members not only see and begin to name their abundant assets, but they also decide how they might be fruitfully deployed.

Conference participants received a copy of his book on Asset Mapping. If you don't have one, I recommend it for your interim bookshelf – the principles are simple and easy to apply.

Of course, interim conferences provide an opportunity to connect with colleagues, pick up ministry ideas and share some of your own.

*Continued on page 2*

I've appreciated seeing the growth in skill and wisdom among attendees, along with deepening appreciation for our mutual work. The processing of Critical Incidents – those trying moments of ministry – often reveals the breadth and depth of our experience as it gives us opportunities to hone our insights.

On behalf of the Board, I'm pleased to report that our Interim Ministry Association is now incorporated in the State of Minnesota, and has received provisional approval as a 501(c)3 corporation from the IRS. Thanks to past President Dave Pretty, who handled the paperwork details. Your tax-deductible gifts and membership dues may now be made directly

We continue to work with Dick Bruesehoff, our link to the ELCA Vocation and Education unit. Dick reports that work continues on new mobility forms, which will be accessed via the web. The Board is currently working on materials for the interim page on the ELCA site. Please note that any e-mail for IMA will be received at Vocation and Education, [ve.info@elca.org](mailto:ve.info@elca.org), and forwarded to us.

During the few years beginning in 2006, our synods will elect a significant number of new bishops. This has important implications for the understanding and practice of interim ministry in the ELCA. One of IMA's challenges is to develop informative, helpful and accessible materials on interim ministry for new synod staffs. Our original volunteers for this project are now in new (non-interim) ministries and are unable to work on this. Please consider whether this is an area where *you* can make an important contribution, and contact me.

A perennial question of congregational leaders is, "Why do we have to do this? Why should we go through this interim process and not just form a Call Committee?" In other words, where's the proof that intentional interim ministry works? In this issue of The Newsletter we're pleased to include brief reports on research surveys of post-interim congregations. We always knew using the interim time intentionally can result in congregational growth and healing. It's gratifying to learn – with statistically significant responses – that the benefits are experi-

enced as much as five years after we've closed our interim term and moved on.

For those who truly feel called to *intentional* interim ministry, there is real joy in seeing lay leadership develop and congregations discover their call to mission on behalf of God's world. And when there are special issues, there is no better time to address them than during the unique openness of congregational life between long-term pastoral relationships. Of course, there's lots of "wear and tear" along with the joy and satisfaction. I've found that a "Sabbath" between the ending of one interim and the beginning of the next is essential to my own health. It's an antidote to spiritual depletion and enables a strong start to the work in the new congregation. I encourage each of you to plan for that down time as you're sitting down to negotiate a new contract.

May God guide and bless you, and grant you a rich harvest of fruitful work as you serve in Christ's name.

Cynthia Stengel, IMA President

---

## **INTERIM MINISTRY ASSOCIATION 2006-07 Address List**

**Paul Axness**, - Newsletter editor  
[paxness@msn.com](mailto:paxness@msn.com)

**Cheryl Berg** - Secretary  
[cheryl.berg@ecunet.org](mailto:cheryl.berg@ecunet.org)

**Dan DeBlock**, Treasurer  
[dandeblock@msn.com](mailto:dandeblock@msn.com)

**Raymond Hittinger** - NALIP Rep.  
[raymond.hittinger@verizon.net](mailto:raymond.hittinger@verizon.net)  
alt: [raymond.hittinger@ecunet.org](mailto:raymond.hittinger@ecunet.org)

**Olin Knudsen**  
[oknudsen@sbcglobal.net](mailto:oknudsen@sbcglobal.net)

**Janet Marvar** - NALIP Rep.  
[janlcm@juno.com](mailto:janlcm@juno.com)

**David C. Newhart**  
[dnewhart44@gmail.com](mailto:dnewhart44@gmail.com)

**Cynthia Stengel** - President  
[cynthia.stengel@ecunet.org](mailto:cynthia.stengel@ecunet.org)

## **Recommended books, etc.**

### **The Balancing Act: The Congregation as Emotional System with Dr. Peter Steinke (VHS)**

This 90 minute VHS is designed as a resource for congregational leadership. The VHS comes with a video discussion guide. It is a resource for clergy and congregational leadership. The program can be used with congregational council members, committees, task forces and various organizations i.e., Women of the Church, Youth Groups etc.

The recommended time involved in this program is approximately three hours. This would include time for showing the video and depending on the size of the group, discussion time. You can also set it up so you have two or more separate sessions because the VHS is 90 minutes long.

The presentation is not a "how-to" but a "how-to-see". Leadership will learn to see the powerful role mature leaders play in building healthy congregations. The program is an excellent resource for leadership development.

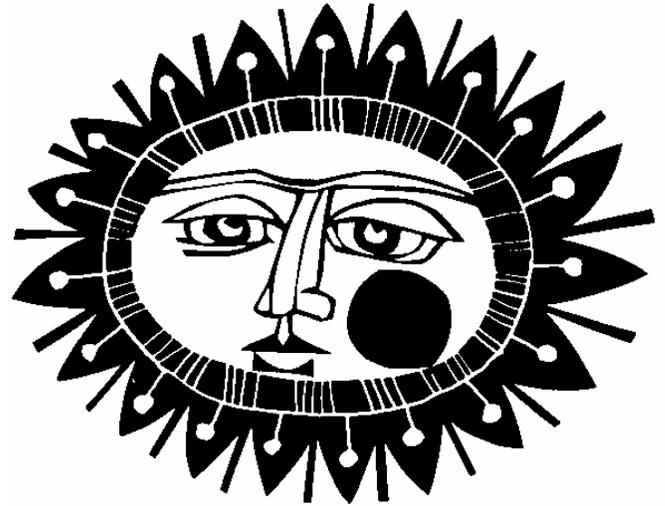
Dr. Peter Steinke, a Lutheran consultant and counselor, introduces the concept of the congregation as emotional system. Using cellular biology and brain/mind research alongside. Biblical theology, Dr. Steinke empowers viewer to take responsibility for his or her own functioning in relationships. Blaming, victim-behavior, secrets, triangles, all are the result of anxiety that is always present in an organization. Dr Steinke suggests ways to regulate one's own anxiety and to deal with the anxiety of other people.

The topics covered with discussion guide are: System Thinking; The Human Brain: Self Differentiation; Leadership; Anxiety; Anxiety is like a virus; Ten Triggers of Anxiety and Seven Characteristics of Healthy Congregations.

The VHS is hard to find and is not available on Amazon.com, one of my favorite places to find used books. The website [www.seracomm.com](http://www.seracomm.com) offers the VHS at a \$79.99 price tag. It is well worth the price in the positive effect it has on leadership in any congregation.

### **Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry**

edited by Roger S. Nicholson



Congregation' the unique challenges, characteristics, transition as a human system, conflict, power and the special calling an Interim minister has. For me this book has the characteristics of a handbook that the interim can review and reflect on as they server a congregation in transition.

The next five chapters look at 'The Interim Journey.' This is where there is a quick review of the five developmental tasks a congregation must deal with before successfully moving through this time of transition. History, identity, leadership, denominational connections and new commitment are the milestones every congregation will eventually come to terms with.

Part 3 of the book helps us in the process of 'Framing the Journey.' All of our work has an ethical dimension and especially a Biblical and Theological basis. The chapters cover such wonderful Biblical concepts as change, transition and transformation. We move from the cross to resurrection and to the light of forgiveness on Easter morn where life is *transformed* to a new life with a new shape.

The tool kit is the subject of the last part of the book. There are ten tools made available to the reader. The tools include: steering team, Bible studies, networking, resources, litanies and evaluation forms every interim needs.

The book is available at Amazon.com and The Alban Institute <http://www.alban.org>

Reviewed by Dan DeBlock

## Preparing the Congregation for the Next Pastor

The overarching goal of the interim period is preparing the congregation for ministry with the next pastor. Whether the situation be little more than maintaining current ministries making profound changes, preparing the congregation for its future is the ultimate goal of the interim time.

This past January and February I conducted a mixed-method research project on Lutheran congregations in both St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota. My hypothesis was that in preparing a congregation for its next pastor, there is a difference between the ministry of an experienced, trained interim specialist and a non-trained or inexperienced pastor. Six dependent variables were studied: congregation identity, missional understanding, humor, addressing problems, expressing expectations, building trust and preparing the congregation for ministry with the next pastor.



Christopher Hagen

Using ordinary least squares regression, among the results was a significant correlation between preparing a congregation for ministry with its next pastor and the fact that the pastor was trained or had experience in interim ministry. The survey statement was: *Because of the work and preparation the congregation did during the interim period, our congregation was well situated for ministry with the next pastor.* Respondents scored on a five-point continuum between strongly agree and strongly disagree.

There is statistical confidence level of 99% for the overall model (F-Test). For the correlation between the fact of the interim pastor being *trained* and preparedness of the congregation, the confidence level also is 99%. For the correlation between *perception of interim experience* and preparedness the confidence level is 95%.

A second survey item was: *The interim pastor was key in preparing our congregation for the next pastor.* Again, respondents scored on a five-point continuum between strongly agree and strongly disagree. The statistical confidence for the overall model was again 99% (F-Test). Confidence for the correlation between the interim pastor being key in preparing the congregation and both interim *training* and re-

spondent's *perception of interim experience* was 99%. The congregation's preparedness was thus measured in two ways, the work of the congregation and the influence of the interim pastor.

It appears that those who are trained in interim ministry are significantly better able to make the needed changes to best position a congregation for its future. Interim training seems to provide:

- a vision of what preparation for the next pastor is to be,
- various skills to use in different circumstances toward preparing congregations,
- a variety of methods for processing congregation preparation, and
- a network of colleagues from whom to gain additional insight and wisdom.

From this study it appears that congregations who are served by trained interim pastors are much better situated for beginning ministry with their next pastor.

by Christopher E. Hagen

The Rev. Christopher E. Hagen is in his tenth interim and serving his fourteenth congregation. He has served as solo pastor, associate pastor and senior pastor in rural, urban and suburban congregations, Lutheran and Presbyterian, in Minnesota, Chicago, Baltimore, Delaware and Pennsylvania. In addition he has volunteered in seafarers ministries and at two state prisons. He served as lay missionary in Senegal, Africa and was a member of two mission teams to Haiti. He currently is earning a Doctor of Ministry in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN. The field of study integrates theology, social science, and missiology.

The study referenced in this article was a mixed-method approach that incorporated a survey of St. Paul, MN congregations with personal interviews of leaders in two Minneapolis congregations and interviews of three pastors widely recognized as experts in the field of interim ministry. This preliminary study will guide a more extensive research project that will explore the distinct advantages of trained interim specialists.

## **Research on Post-Intentional Interim Ministry**

Would you believe that churches who have completed the intentional interim process are still feeling the benefits five years later? Congregations and pastors are still seeing the intentional interim process as a positive and worthwhile endeavor. 82% of respondents indicated that the church is even healthier now than it was at the end of the period of transition.

Dr. Les Robinson of the Center for Congregational Health desired to articulate the extent to which the work done during the transition positively impacted congregations 24 to 36 months after the Intentional Interim Process was completed. In an article of "Interim Ministry Today" a publication of Center for Congregational Health they discussed their findings.

The research project used on-site interviews, phone conferences and questionnaires to gather the information necessary to reach their conclusions. The primary purpose was to help congregations summarize what they had accomplished, provide interims a review of strengths and growth areas, and assure judicatory members about what is delivered to the congregation and help improve training of interims.

Dr. Les Robinson indicated in his article that thirty-seven churches were included in the survey and twenty-seven responded. A six-point Likert Scale was used for some of the questions. The study produced over 1300 written comments.

82% of the respondents indicated the church was healthier, 7% of the comments were neutral and 11% could be interpreted as negative responses. This implies by and large that issues and concerns raised during the interim period were dealt with in a satisfactory manner.

For more information on this study please contact Center for Congregational Health, Medical Center Boulevard, Winston-Salem, NC 27157-1098, phone: (336) 716-9722 email: [congreg@wfubmc.edu](mailto:congreg@wfubmc.edu) website: [www.healthychurch.org](http://www.healthychurch.org)

Dan DeBlock



### **Here's a thought...**

Print an extra copy of this newsletter and share it with someone else doing interim ministry.



### **From the Treasurer**

Good news, the IRS has declared that we are a non-profit organization and membership fees are tax deductible.

Remember a great way to support the Interim Ministry Association is to have the church you are serving collect a free will offering in appreciation for your ministry. Those offerings help us support your concerns in the ELCA.

Blessings on your ministry,  
Dan DeBlock

### **Association Dues**

Annual dues for the Interim Ministry Association of the ELCA (IMA) are \$50. Dues are tax deductible.

Please make all checks payable to **Interim Ministry Association** and mail them to:

IMA  
ELCA Vocation and Education Unit  
8765 W. Higgins Road  
Chicago, IL 60631

**Upcoming NALIP offerings**

**DISCERNMENT FOR INTERIM MINISTRY**

12 hour events

February 1-2, 2007 – Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

**BASIC EDUCATION FOR THE PRACTICE OF INTENTIONAL INTERIM MINISTRY**

Six month program, three sequential phases

Oct. 30 – Nov. 3, 2006 and April 23-27, 2007 – Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

November 6-10, 2006 and April 16-20, 2007 – Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO

**CONTINUING INTERIM EDUCATION**

12 & 36 hour events

December 5-8, 2006 – “Essentials Beyond Basic” – Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN



**ADVENT**

**Other offerings**

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center has a feast of helpful workshops. The upcoming schedule can be found at

[www.lmpeacecenter.org/schedule.html](http://www.lmpeacecenter.org/schedule.html).

Here is a sample for 2007:

Date	Location	Event	Pre-registration deadline
March 2	Warren, MI (Detroit area)	Leadership & Anxiety in the Church	February 16
March 9-10	Brentwood, TN	Healthy Congregations	February 23
March 12-16	Tulsa, Oklahoma	Mediation Skills Training Institute	February 12
March 20-22	Portland, OR	Here I Stand	February 20
March 22	Albuquerque, NM	Leadership & Anxiety in the Church	March 8
April 16-18	Hinsdale, IL	Advanced Clergy Clinic	September
April 20	South Carolina	Leadership & Anxiety in the Ch	April 9*
April 27-28	Newport, KY	Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Cong Relations	April 13
April 30-May 2	Lombard, IL	Clergy Clinic	September