

## Snapshot of a synod interim support group

Interim pastors in Metropolitan Chicago Synod (MCS) have been meeting since the earliest days of the ELCA. They've served under several bishops, with a variety of approaches in dealing with churches in transition. Like most interim support groups, participants include trained intentional interims plus pastors in a variety of circumstances (retired, part-time, awaiting call, supply). In the late 80's, only one pastor, Oscar Kraft, was issued a call to interim ministry, but now the synod has a mailing list of about 35, of which the Synod Council approves 9 for call. Current practice is to issue site-specific term calls.

In the early days of the group, interim pastors developed structure and procedures with interest in developing helpful processes. In time, a monthly meeting was established, featuring check-in and a topical presentation. Presenters have been drawn from Church-wide staff, ecumenical resources, interims with special expertise, and suggestions from within the group. A staff person regularly attends, and the bishop meets with the group at least once a year, and at an annual meeting a Convener is elected.

Besides support and continuing education, the activities of the MCS group have included changing the "church culture," moving from a focus on "the call process" to "transitional/ transformational ministry" and helping congregations opt for intentional interim work, (not "change avoidance" but a time for experimentation). The group has increased its emphasis on the developmental tasks, and has seen the number of trained people increase. Significant changes have been made in contracting and compensation with input from the group over the years, and a small committee is currently working on an interim ministry section for the synod's web page. One of the ongoing challenges for the synod is how to manage its cadre of interims when many sites cannot afford full-time ministry.

Several years ago Bishop Paul Landahl formed a Bishop's Advisory Group for Interim Ministry.



Some Chicago area interim pastors enjoy a break in the day.

Members are appointed by the bishop, and include the current convener. Responsibilities of the group include interviewing and recommending candidates for call to interim ministry in the synod; proposing ways of increasing awareness of the value of intentional interim ministry among the pastors, lay leaders, and congregations of the synod; making themselves available to lead workshops and congregational presentations; and making recommendations to the bishop for improvements to current ways of handling interim ministry. In March, members of the Bishop's Advisory group met with senior seminarians at LSTC to discuss interim ministry. A suggestion was made that this would be valuable information for middlers before they begin internship – which might be seen as a specialized form of interim ministry.

The Metro Chicago interims are blessed with a synod rich in resources, good leadership and the support of their bishop, and commitment both to collegial sharing and to growth in interim skills.

The synod is one of many that will be electing a new bishop this year, and the interim leaders are preparing for the transition: a date is already on the calendar for the Bishop's Advisory Group to meet with the outgoing and incoming bishops. Now that's a good self-differentiated plan in the face of change.

– Cynthia Stengel

## From the President

Greetings, IMA members and interim ministry supporters as we conclude the season of spiritual renewal and celebrate the Risen Christ.

This Newsletter issue highlights an important aspect of interim ministry: our need for professional colleagues. Most of us have access to ministry groups that meet regularly or occasionally for text studies, ecumenical services or community projects, cluster/conference business, etc. In addition to the work we share in common with all pastors, we also address a constellation of special needs during the interim time. It's really helpful to have the feedback, support and wisdom of other interim ministers as we engage the challenges of grief, renewal, new identity, and plans for closure.

While serving interim congregations in several synods, I've always sought out an interim colleague group for "mutual conversation and consolation of the saints." Sometimes I've had to travel some distance to participate. When no Lutheran group was available, I've joined an ecumenical support group or one of another denomination. All the groups I've been part of included a significant block of time for check in, discussing personal and professional issues of concern.

Some colleague groups include regular participation of a synod staff person and an occasional meeting with the bishop; some emphasize continuing education, with a focus on interim skills or new ministry trends or other didactic material; some regularly process Critical Incidents. Some groups work to interpret interim ministry to congregations, or help develop resources and procedures for synod staff. Some eat together; others include worship and communion in their meetings. In all of them there are colleagues who love the church and who understand what we're trying to accomplish. We take turns encouraging and helping one another.

How does interim support happen where you are? What's working...and what needs aren't being met? Can IMA be of help? I'd like to hear from you about your experience—just send a note to my attention at [VE.info@elca.org](mailto:VE.info@elca.org) and include Interim Ministry in the subject line.

On another topic, new mobility forms for pastors are under development and are ready for preview. The new system will be web-based, and when it's

finally in place it will help available interims and synod staff seeking trained interim leaders to find one another. This has been a perennial challenge since the earliest days of interim ministry. The new mobility process is not designed specifically for interim ministry—it's for the whole ordained roster—but it will be a great help for us.

The new system can be viewed at [www.elca.org/call](http://www.elca.org/call), using the password "roster." At the right of the screen there is a link to download Formatta software, which is necessary to read the site. Take a look—and if you have comments or suggestions you can forward them from the site. The forms are multi-functional (like folders within folders), but lose this functionality when downloaded to your desktop, so you're encouraged to simply peruse them online.

Each summer, Board of Pensions representative Polly Bergerson addresses pension and benefit issues at the Annual Conference. It was at one of those conferences that she learned we were not being covered by disability insurance during downtime between assignments. The Board is pleased to announce that such coverage will be available in 2008, with further details forthcoming. Polly also told us that there will be "significant changes" to our benefits plan next year, and she'll be able to preview that with us in May at the Conference. Polly has been an important source of communication and advocacy for interim issues at the Board of Pensions, and will again be available for one-on-one consultation at the conference in May.



In closing, here's a little Easter smile: During a children's sermon a little girl asked her pastor, "Do you know what the first thing was that Jesus said when he rose from the dead?" The pastor responded, "I don't know. What do you think?" The little girl stands up, gestures broadly and says, "The first thing that Jesus said when he rose from the dead was, 'Ta-da!'"

God bless you and your work in this season of profound grace and holy joy.

Cynthia Stengel  
IMA President

## Interim Pastor Call or On Leave from Call?

*Interim pastors are dealt with differently in respect to call status. Here is one bishop's understanding and practice.*  
— ed

The Synodical Bishop with the consent of the congregation or Congregation Council appoints interim Congregational Pastors. Congregations do not call Interim Pastors. But interim pastors may serve under a call from Synod Council. The Secretary of the ELCA has encouraged Synods to grant calls to Interim Pastors from the Synod Council, but the decision to call or not to call Interim Pastors is a decision made by each Synod. There are important consequences to Interim Pastors serving or not serving under call.

When a pastor's call ends without the pastor having accepted a new call, the pastor faces three possibilities: the pastor may be placed on the Retired Roster (RR); the pastor may be placed on the On Leave from Call Roster (OLCR); the pastor may drop off the roster.

Placement on the RR or the OLCR requires the request of the pastor, the endorsement of the Synodical Bishop, and the approval of the Synod Council. Pastors are to make the request within 45 days of ending their call. Without that request, the pastor may simply drop from the roster. Once dropped from the roster, the pastor would need to receive the recommendation of the Synodical Bishop and the approval of the Candidacy Committee before being readmitted to the roster.

A pastor on the RR is retained on the RR as long as the pastor lives in compliance with the policies of the church. The same is not true for those on the OLCR. OLC is granted in yearly increments. Unless the leave is granted for education or family purposes, it is limited to three successive years. In unusual circumstances – with the recommendation of the bishop, the action of the Synod Council, and the Conference of Bishops – it may be extended beyond three years.

Consider a pastor who has served the church as an Interim Pastor for three years while OLC. At the end of three years – without an extension – the pastor would drop from the roster.

On the other hand, a pastor who served as Interim Pastor under Synodical Call for three years would still be on the roster at the end of the three years. In

fact, that Interim would have the possibility of serving the next three year OLC.

Interim pastors serve at the pleasure of the congregation and Synodical Bishop. They can be removed as Interim Pastor by the Congregation Council or Synodical Bishop [or themselves].

Synods that give Synodical Calls to Interims have the opportunity to develop a cadre of specially trained, experienced, intentional Interim Pastors. Developing such a cadre is not possible when Interim Pastors must either accept a congregational call within three years or be dropped from the roster.

On the other hand, not having a cadre of experienced Interim Pastors gives synods the opportunity to provide options to pastors in situations where the healthiest option is for the pastor to end the call without having to wait for a new congregational call. They may be able to serve as an Interim OLC Pastor for up to three years as they await a call to a new congregation.

— the Rev. Rolf Wangberg, bishop  
Northwest Minnesota Synod



### IMA now has a website!

We have been working for some time now to provide a website for communication to you. It is a work in progress. The address is [www.ELCA.org/InterimMinistry](http://www.ELCA.org/InterimMinistry). Your comments, suggestions, ideas are welcome and appreciated.

## Recommended books

### **A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix**

By Edwin Friedman. The Guilford Press

Edwin Friedman's insights into leadership are needed more than ever. He is the author of *Generation to Generation* and *Friedman's Fables*. Friedman was the first to tell us that all organizations have personalities and to relate the insights of family therapy to churches and pastors. *Failure of Nerve* is essential reading for all leaders.

Friedman's insights about our society, which is oriented toward safety rather than adventure, helps explain the sabotage that leaders constantly face today. He argues for strength and self-differentiation as the marks of true leadership. His formula for success is more maturity, not more data; stamina, not technique; and personal responsibility, not empathy.

This is perhaps Edwin Friedman's magnum opus -- or would have been, had he lived to see this to completion. The first five chapters are thorough; the latter five chapters are somewhat sketchier; but there is enough material here that the interested reader can get a pretty good glimpse of where Friedman was headed.

"There exists," he says, "throughout America today a rampant sabotaging of leaders who try to stand tall amidst the raging anxiety-storms of our time. It is a highly reactive atmosphere pervading all the institutions of our society -- a regressive mood that contaminates the decision-making processes of government and corporations at the highest level, and, on the local level, seeps down into the deliberations of neighborhood church, synagogue, hospital, library, and school boards." This reactivity makes it exceptionally difficult for clear, decisive, well-defined leadership to function effectively.

I find this to be an extremely important book for intentional interim ministers. The church out to do a quick fix may regret its solution. You just might become a more effective leader when you apply the lessons of this book.

### **Behavioral Covenants in Congregations: A Handbook for Honoring Differences**

By Gil Rendle. Alban Institute

Gil Rendle is a senior consultant with the Alban In-

stitute. An ordained Methodist clergyperson with fifteen years in parish ministry, he has extensive experience as a congregational and judicatory consultant, focusing on organizational development and systems theory

How does the congregation live and work together despite differences of age, race, culture, opinion, gender, and theological or political position. Rendle describes a method of establishing behavioral covenants that includes leadership instruction, training tools, resources (visual models, examples of specific covenants), small-group exercises, plans for meetings and retreats.

"*Behavioral Covenants in Congregations* is a gem of a book for any pastor or church leader who has noticed how inappropriately people often behave in their church relationships." -- Rev. Samuel E. Robinson, Ph.D.

Rendle concludes "the book by presenting a practical "how to" and "why" for the establishment of a behavioral covenant. The material is highly adaptable to many diverse faith traditions and also highly practical. These resources include four meeting agendas of varying time-lengths and reproducible handouts.

You will want this in your kit bag for interim ministry.

### **Boundaries**

By Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend. Running Press Book Publishers

Having boundaries is essential to a healthy, balanced lifestyle. It is also essential for healthy congregations.

Physical boundaries help us determine who may touch us, mental boundaries give us the freedom to have our own thoughts, emotional boundaries help us to deal with our own emotions and spiritual boundaries help us to distinguish God's will from our own. Many Christians have drawn overly flexible boundaries or overly rigid boundaries.

This book has become immensely popular, most likely because it makes personal boundaries easier to define and is filled with spiritual purpose. The format tends to be self-help for such a complex discussion, yet that does not diminish the relevance of the topic or the importance of the material presented in the book.

— Reviewed by Dan DeBlock

## IMA constitution changes

From time to time, our IMA Constitution is reviewed and amended to reflect changes in our organization. At this year's Annual Meeting we'll be discussing and voting on several changes, which were discussed by the Board and recommended for adoption. These changes reflect the closer relationship of the IMA with the ELCA churchwide organization. The full constitution and the changes are included at the end of this newsletter. The items are:

I. Name - amended to highlight the connection to the Vocation and Education unit.

IV.A. & IV.A.1. A stylistic amendment: Church is capitalized.

IV.A.1.e. Addition of a new way in which IMA will serve the Church.

V.C. This item specifies the presence of a V&E advisory representative to the board. We have actually operated this way since the beginning of IMA, as had NALIP prior to the 2001 reorganization. Now it is a formal rather than informal relationship.

VII.E. This statement on amending the Constitution is a regular provision of Church-related organizations, and reflects our closer relationship.

IX. The resources of IMA, if any, are to be directed to the benefit of interim ministry in the ELCA. This, too, is "standard practice" for related organizations.

Please review these amendments before the Annual Meeting. If you have questions, please send a note to the IMA board so we can include a response at the meeting.



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### 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

## Good-by

For the past several years I have been the editor of this newsletter. In April I retired after ten years at the challenge of interim ministry and thirty six in various kinds of ministry. It has been a fascinating pilgrimage. With retirement I hand over the responsibility of this budding publication to someone else. Thanks for the support and readership.

PAX,  
 Paul Axness

## Bishop, when a Pastor Leaves – Who can Help?

Again this spring, several synods are receiving nominations from their members in search of candidates for their new bishop. In the synod where I am serving, 14 pastors were initially nominated for the final list of five to be presented for vote at the June Synod Assembly. I reviewed the 14 resumes even though I am an intentional interim pastor on loan to the synod, and therefore ineligible to vote. Nothing on any of the resumes, four of them from pastors with synod staff experience, indicated anything about interest in or skills for working with congregations in the midst of pastoral leadership transition. When I attended the Conference nominating Assembly, nothing was said by anyone who spoke on behalf of any one or more of the candidates.

I wondered to myself, “How could so many well-intended church people, including those 14 candidates, manage to be completely silent on a component of a bishop’s role and responsibility that is as important and consumptive of the bishop’s daily work agenda as is the required leadership arena in relation to a congregation’s challenge at the time of pastoral leadership change?”

Having served more than 25 intentional interim

pastorates in ten different ELCA Synods and in partnership with 13 bishops, I cannot emphasize too strongly the joy of partnership in ministry that comes to a congregation and its interim pastor when the bishop and her/his staff associates bring to the congregation’s interim period a studied and collegial approach to the teamwork required to faithfully guide a congregation into a new future.

Thirty years of study, planning, specific training for intentional interim ministry, and the honest and careful review of the teaming of those who have guided pastoral transition in a healthy way has consistently shown the importance of informed and equipped interim pastors and synodical officials. In a rapidly changing church, we cannot underestimate the critical role the bishop and the synod office play in the critical moment for ministry that the interim period presents.

It is my hope that as ELCA synods across the country elect new bishops this coming Spring and Summer, that the pre-election discourse will address the importance of the bishop’s key role in the management of change.

– Paul N. Svingen

## Interim Ministry Association Report of the Treasurer—12 April 2007

3/7/07	Opening balance	\$2707.35
<u>Credits</u>	Interest	\$0.34
	Memberships (15)	<u>710.00</u>
		710.34
<u>Debits</u>	Chicago Conf. (1)	<b>102.70</b>
4/12/07		\$3314.09

– Dan DeBlock

# **12th Annual NALIP Conference**

**May 24 - 26, 2006**



**Presenter:**

**Gilbert R. Rendle**

**Friday, May 25, 2006**

Author, Seminar Leader, Senior Consultant, the Alban Institute

Before joining the staff of the Alban Institute, **Gil Rendle** served as senior pastor of two urban congregations in Pennsylvania for sixteen years and as a denominational consultant for the United Methodist Church for nine years. Gil has an extensive background in organizational development, group and systems theory, and leadership development. He frequently consults with congregations on planning, staff and leadership development, and issues of change. He is well known for his work with middle judicatory offices and staff as they wrestle with the issues of both denominational and congregational change. In training workshops and leadership retreats, Gil has led numerous large and small groups in practical learning that directly impacts the decisions and behaviors that participants practice in their congregations. He is the author of four books, as well as a contributor to two other books and the author of numerous articles and monographs.

**Workshop Title: "Telling the Better Story"**

Howard Gardner points out that a primary function of the leader is to help the people tell a better story about themselves. Some congregations are so rehearsed in their problems and their scarcities that they lost the better story of how they have been called by God for great purpose. Other congregations are doing well institutionally but fear boldness and can't tell the larger story of the "more" that God is calling them to do.

This workshop will help interim pastors reconsider leadership as helping people have a "holy conversation" about questions that can change the story of the congregation. Real steps and tools will be offered to begin the search for the better faithful story of the people.

Gil Rendle and Alice Mann are authors of *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations*. Gil suggests that reading this book before the Conference may be of benefit.

Go to the NALIP website for more details – [www.nalip.net](http://www.nalip.net).



**CONSTITUTION**  
**INTERIM MINISTRY ASSOCIATION**  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

*Adopted June 2003*

*Amended May 25, 2006*

*with proposed 2007 amendments*

**I. NAME:**

The name of this organization shall be the **Interim Ministry Association - ELCA**. The Association is related to the Churchwide Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through the Vocation and Education unit or its successor.

**II. PURPOSE:**

*The purpose of the IMA is to strengthen and sustain excellence in interim ministry within the ELCA.*

**III. MEMBERSHIP:**

- A. Those eligible for membership in the IMA are those rostered leaders in good standing of the ELCA and the full-communion partners of the ELCA who are committed to fostering the practice of intentional interim ministry.
- B. *Voting members shall be those who have paid their membership dues for the current calendar year and are in attendance at the annual meeting.*

**IV. GOALS:**

A. *The goals of IMA are twofold: serving the Church and serving IMA members.*

1. *In serving **the Church**, IMA will:*

- a. Promote clarity of language about interim ministry.
- b. Advocate high performance standards for all who practice interim ministry.
- c. Encourage effective placement of pastors and other leaders in congregations experiencing transition.
- d. *Promote understanding of the difference between polity tasks (call process) and basic developmental tasks (congregation in transition), which are:*

*(1.) come to terms with history*

*(2.) affirm the new congregational identity*

*(3.) allow for necessary leadership changes*

*(4.) strengthen denominational ties*

*(5.) prepare for new pastoral leadership.*

*e. Advise the staff of the Vocation and Education unit on interim ministry.*

2. *In serving its members, IMA will:*

- a. Provide support for one another as interim practitioners by providing for an annual conference and encouraging the formation of regional support groups and participation by its members in such groups.
- b. Provide a unified voice in advocating with the churchwide agencies and departments on behalf of committed practitioners of interim ministry regarding issues of concern.
- c. Promote more effective interim ministry, sharing experiences and opportunities for continuing education.
- d. *Provide for communication with constituents and other church partners through print and/or electronic media.*

## **V. GOVERNANCE:**

- A. Governance of IMA is conducted by the Annual Meeting on behalf of its membership.
- B. A governing board, consisting of 5 or more members in good standing of IMA, who, at the time of election, are engaged in the practice of intentional interim ministry, and are rostered in the ELCA, shall conduct IMA business between annual meetings.
- C. The Executive Director of the Vocation and Education unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its successor shall appoint one person who will serve as an advisory member of the board. This advisor shall participate in meetings of the board and the annual meeting of the Association, and shall receive copies of all minutes and financial reports
- D. Board members shall be elected by the Annual Meeting for three-year terms, renewable once. Terms of board members shall be staggered to promote continuity of leadership and rotation of membership.
- D. A quorum of the board may conduct urgent business as required. A quorum will be a simple majority of the board.
- E. The Association Board shall provide for an annual business meeting of IMA.
- F. The Association Board shall appoint two members in good standing of the IMA who are not serving on the Board to conduct an annual financial audit.
- G. The Association Board reports to the Annual Meeting of IMA members. Its report is to be made available to members via electronic media following this meeting.
- H. The Association Board shall appoint members to the NALIP coordinating council as necessary who will be voting members of the IMA Board. Terms of these appointments will be staggered to ensure continuity of leadership and rotation of members.
- I. The Association Board shall make recommendations for NALIP consideration based upon the input from the annual meeting.
- J. The Association Board shall receive a complete annual report from NALIP, including the treasurer's and audit reports.
- K. The Association Board will appoint one member in good standing of IMA to serve on the NALIP audit committee.

- L. The Association Board shall oversee other projects suggested by the IMA annual meeting. This work may be delegated to IMA Task Forces.
- M. The Association Board will insure that the IMA promptly remits its designated share of NALIP support.

**VI. OFFICERS:**

- A. Officers of the Association Board shall be Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer, with the usual duties of those offices.
- B. The Chair and Secretary shall be elected from among the members of the board and shall serve for two-year terms, renewable once. Terms of office for the Chair and Secretary shall be staggered to promote continuity of leadership and rotation of officers.
- C. The Treasurer shall be appointed yearly from among the members of IMA, and serve no more than 5 consecutive years.

**VII. AMENDMENTS:**

- A. Amendments to this document may be proposed by the Association Board in writing to the membership not less than 60 days prior to the annual meeting.
- B. The Association Board will accept and review suggestions for amendment from members and make recommendations to the IMA membership in writing not less than 60 days prior to the next annual meeting.
- C. Amendments to this document may also be proposed by action of the annual meeting.
- D. Amendments to this document will be adopted upon a 2/3 vote of the voting members attending the annual meeting.
- E. Amendments to this document should be drafted in consultation with the ELCA Vocation and Education program unit and must be approved by the ELCA Church Council.

**VIII. DUES:**

- A. Members shall pay annual dues. These dues enable IMA to provide communication, advocacy, and some resources for its membership and the ELCA and underwrite the costs of the work of the Association Board and NALIP.
- B. The amount of dues will be determined by the Association Board and approved by the annual meeting.

**IX. IX. DISSOLUTION:**

Upon dissolution, this association will disburse any assets to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) for the support of transitional ministries.