

Spring of 2008

Volume 3 Issue 2

Inside this issue:

<i>Texas-Louisiana Tri-Synod Interim Conference</i>	1
<i>Websites and the Interim Ministry (survey)</i>	1
<i>Interim Ministry Board From the President</i>	2,3 24
<i>Photo's from Tri-Synod Interim Conference</i>	3
<i>ELCA Website is New Healthy Congregations</i>	5
<i>Church Website New Front Door</i>	5
<i>Education Opportunities</i>	6
<i>Basic Education Scholarships</i>	7
<i>A Time to Plant By Paul Swingen</i>	7
<i>Book review by Newhart Membership</i>	8
<i>Doctor of Ministry in Interim Ministry</i>	9
<i>When do we call the Real Pastor? By Richard Mathisen</i>	10
<i>Annual Report Contact Us</i>	11 12

Special points of interest:

- Websites and the Interim Ministry
- A Time to Plant by Paul Swingen
- The New Front Door
- Real Pastor by Richard Mathisen
- Book Review by David Newhart
- Doctor of Ministry by Andy Carlsson



The Newsletter

Texas-Louisiana Tri-Synod Interim Conference

The Texas-Louisiana Tri-Synod Interim Conference was held April 15-16, 2008 and attended by forty four participants.

The Bishops of three Texas-Louisiana Synods (North Texas-Northern Louisiana, Southwestern Texas and Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast) invited all those who serve as Interim to attend a Tri-Synodical Interim Ministry Workshop scheduled that was held April 15-16, 2008 at Cedarbrake Retreat Center in Belton, Texas.

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss interim ministry in the three synods, to listen and learn from each other, and to begin a process of raising awareness for and growing the presence of Interim Ministry in our synods' life and mission. The Bishops believe that this particular min-

istry is vital in the life of congregations in transition and we need to deepen our understanding of how to lift up those who serve in interim work. "We therefore strongly encourage you to attend." This event involved trained as well as untrained pastors serving as Interims, as well as those who might be interested in serving as an Interim.

Bishop Michael Rinehart of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod attended along with Synod Bishop's Assistants from Northern Texas, Northern Louisiana, Southwest Texas and Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast.

The attendees included Intentional Interims, as well as those serving as Interims part-time and full-time, those interested in finding out more what Interim Ministry is all about, and spouses. The purpose of the

retreat was to discuss interim ministry in the three synods, to listen and learn from each other, and to begin a process of raising awareness of and growing the presence of Interim Ministry in our synods' life and mission. The retreat was well received and the excitement generated promised future interim training events to follow. Stay tuned for more developments from the Texas Tri-Synod Interim Network.



Training conducted at the Texas-Louisiana Tri-Synod Conference.

Websites and the Interim Ministry (survey)

By Dan DeBlock

During this last intentional interim at [Trinity Lutheran in Grove City, MN](#) I built the congregation a website. As a result I got high praises from the congregations church secretary and call committee. "I have heard

only positive comments about both the website and the weekly email updates." The call committee felt the website had helped tremendously in the call process because the candidates were able to have a better under-

standing of the congregations purpose and direction. Please share with us some of your experiences with church websites.

<http://survey.elca.us/>

Go to survey

NALIP 14th Annual Conference

The National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors (NALIP) 2008 Conference will begin at 1:00 p.m, Thursday, May 22 and conclude at Noon, Saturday, May 24, 2008 (immediately following the Interim Ministry Network, Inc. conference being held at Pheasant Run Resort, St. Charles, IL)

NALIP is made up of two associations: The Interim Ministry Association (IMA) of the ELCA; and the LCMS Interim Ministry Conference (IMC).

The annual Conference brings together Lutherans who work with congregations in transition — pastors, laity, judicatory representatives and other interested persons.

**Interim Ministry Network
(IMN)
28TH ANNUAL CON-
FERENCE
MAY 20-22, 2008**

2008 Conference

**Thursday, May 22
1:00 pm
thru
Saturday, May 24
Noon**

**Chicago Marriott O'Hare
Chicago, IL**

[Conference Information](#)
[Additional Information](#)
[Conference Schedule](#)
[Conference Presenter](#)
[Online Registration Form](#)

<http://nalip.net/>



Seated LtoR Jan Marvar and Cheryl Berg; Standing LtoR David Newhart, Dan DeBlock, Richard Mathisen, and Olin Knudsen; Missing Keith Hammer.

Interim Ministry Association Board

The board of the IMA welcomes your questions, comments, and interim ministry suggestions. The members of the board also serve congregations — and our addresses and phone numbers change regularly. The best ways to reach us are by [e-mail](#) or [surface mail](#).

Olin Knudsen, President
Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana

Richard Mathisen, Secretary
Southeastern Pennsylvania

David Newhart, Treasurer
and NALIP representative
Northeastern Pennsylvania

Dan DeBlock, editor news-
letter and website
Southwestern Minnesota

Cheryl Berg
Northwestern Minnesota

R. Keith Hammer
Eastern Washington-
Idaho Synod

Jan Marvar, NALIP
representative

From the President Olin Knudsen

Partners in Intentional Interim Ministry,

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What do Honey Bees, California Redwoods and Interim Ministry have to do with each other?

We'll look at each and I'll bet you will figure out the connection.

The huge California Redwoods amaze all of us. They are the largest living things on earth and the tallest trees in the world. Many are 300 feet high and over 2,500 years old. One would think that trees so large must have a tremendous root system that reaches down hundreds of feet into the earth. Not so! What is the redwoods' secret? The

root systems intertwine; they are locked to each other. Storms come, winds blow, and lightning flashes, but the redwoods still stand. They are not alone. The Redwood trees rely on the support and the protection of each other.

Honey Bees are responsible for pollinating 1/3 of all foods.

(continued page 4)

**Pictures from the
Texas-Louisiana
Tri-Synod
Interim Retreat**



**Attendees included Bishop Rinehart of the
Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod**



From the President (con't)

(continued from page 2)

The average per capita honey consumption in US is 1.3 pound. One hive produces an average of 50 pounds of honey per year. To produce just 1 pound of honey the bees must visit approximately 2 million flowers and fly 55,000 miles! In its lifetime ONE honeybee produces 1/12 teaspoon of honey! How is this possible? They work and support each other.

In the last ten years the number of ordained ministers becoming interim pastors has increased tenfold. In his book, *Interim Pastor's Manual* (revised edition) Alan G. Gripe, Geneva Press (1997), Alan Gripe offers practical wisdom as well as biblical and theological insight:

"Pastors themselves should understand both the opportunity and the challenge in serving as an intentional interim pastor. More qualified persons of all ages are needed who are willing to polish the special skills required for this particular ministry. Above all, recognition needs to be given to those pioneers in this field whose devotion to the church has inspired them to endure the difficulties that interim service sometimes imposes." He goes on to say that Survival is the crucial issue to face – "The uniqueness of intentional interim ministry places restrictions upon the methods of personal survival for the interim pastor. Because the interim pastor is temporary, valued long-term relationships cannot be achieved within the parish. If the interim pastor does not live in the same community all the time, finding support systems can become difficult, yet they are more crucial for survival. If the interim pastor crosses Synodical or regional

boundaries, he or she will have to find peer support in special ways."

The ministry is no place for loners. Although we may know of those pastors who relate to no one beyond the church they serve (they do not attend Conferences, Synod Assemblies, Deanery Meetings, Support Group, Continuing Education, etc.) and may even seem to get along without any "outside" support, for Interim Ministry, being a loner is fatal. Being a spouse of an Interim is even more critical for Support. Roots that the pastor and spouse normally set in a settled call are not set or if they are they are shallow as an Interim. Congregation, Deanery, Synod all present challenges to get connected and stay connected.

No doubt, by now, you have figured out the connection among the Redwoods, Honey Bees and Interims: Support, Encouragement, Protection, Team Work

This is how God sustains me and my spouse. In addition to my monthly Deanery monthly meetings, I attend annual Bishop's Convocation, Theological Conference and Synod Assembly (my contract includes time and expenses to attend these events). I also attend the annual Interim Ministry Network Conference (IMN) and the National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastor's Annual Conference (NALIP), both at my own expense. NALIP is made up of ELCA, Interim Ministry Association (IMA) and LCMS, Interim Ministry Conference (IMC). I maintain my membership annually in the IMN and IMA (both at my own expense). In past interims I was part of a monthly Interim Presbytery support group. I attend both a monthly Clergy support group and Clergy and Spouse support

group and I am currently working with a coach (all at my own expense). This is what works for me; I offer these to you as a healthy and supportive way of shaping my ministry and calming my life and that of my spouse in the anxious times in which we serve. As you already know serving as an Interim is a costly investment that you pay for out of your own pocket; I believe it is worth it!

May I suggest if you are not already doing so join and attend the annual Interim Conferences for IMN, May 20-22, 2008 and NALIP, May 22-24, 2008, both in Chicago. Check out these web sites for more information.

Interim Ministry Network

<http://www.imnedu.org>

NALIP

<http://www.nalip.net>

IMA

<http://elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Ministry/Interim-Ministry-Association.aspx>

In case you have not heard of this, the Presbyterians have done "[A Study of the Effectiveness of Interim Pastors](#)", published in September of 2007.

<http://www.pcusa.org/research/downloads/interimpastors.pdf>

My encouragement to you is to stay not only connected but interconnected. If you don't have a support group, I encourage you to start one. If you have questions or have discovered support systems that work for you please let me know, ve.info@elca.org.

Blessings,

Olin R. Knudsen



We Have a New Website at ELCA.ORG

The ELCA Church wide Organization is transforming the current Web site into a completely redeveloped and streamlined ELCA.org! They are working out the bugs as we correspond.

Interim Ministry Association website at www.elca.org/interimministry is not working, however, the new website is

now located at: <http://elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Ministry/Interim-Ministry-Association.aspx>

Another way to get to the new website is go to the links at the bottom of the page and go to the Vocation and Education link. Under Vocation and Education you will find a link called interim.

The new site has the same information just in a new format. We hope you make the correction on your favorites links.



**New Link to
Interim
Ministry
Association**

Healthy Congregations Facilitator Training

Healthy Congregations is a series of six workshops, each five sessions in length. It was designed by Dr. Peter Steinke to help congregations move forward in their ministry. Healthy Congregations workshops are based on systems theory in their understanding of congregations. This perspective has helped hundreds of congregations understand the dynamics of

working together. They exist to develop resources, train leaders, educate and consult with congregations, community organizations, and agencies committed to fostering healthy emotional processes. Part of that mission includes a commitment to ongoing training and support for the over 1,850 facilitators across the United States and Canada:

- Healthy Congregations blog
- Member Resources (what's this?) (login required)
- Continuing education through training events and seminars

<http://www.hcongregations.net/>

Congregational Websites the New Front Door

by Lynne M. Baab

Congregational Web sites have three audiences, two of them primary and one of them less prominent. One audience is congregation members. Often they come to the Web site for information.

A second audience is potential visitors. Is the time of the worship service posted on the homepage?

A third audience congregational Web sites might consider address-

ing is people from other congregations who are looking for resources.

Communication scholars have noted a significant shift in communication patterns in recent decades.

To read more about this topic go to the [Alban Institute Website](http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=5932) at:

[Our New Front Door](http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=5932)
<http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=5932>



Discernment For Interim Ministry

DISCERNMENT FOR INTERIM MINISTRY

12 hour events

- July 29-30, 2008 - Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO
- Sept 18 - 19, 2008 - Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

Do I have the experience, the leadership gifts, and the calling to Interim Ministry?

This event is specifically designed to identify personal and pastoral gifts needed for this rewarding ministry, and to help you become aware of professional and lifestyle challenges. In the process you will also work with synod staff to discern whether they can affirm and use your gifts for Intentional Interim Ministry.

Note: Discernment Events can easily be scheduled by synods or regions for

as few as ten participants at a modest fee. This new workshop was specially designed as a low-cost introduction to interim ministry issues before enrollment in the 60-hour training course.

Register online for Kairos courses!

https://www.luthersem.edu/lifelong_learning/kairos/registration.asp



Basic Education for Intentional Interim Ministry

BASIC EDUCATION FOR THE PRACTICE OF INTENTIONAL INTERIM MINISTRY

Six month program, three sequential phases

- Sept. 8-12, 2008 (Mt. Olivet Retreat Center, Farmington, MN)
- June 16-20, 2008 and January 26-30, 2009 (The Lu-

theran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Gettysburg, PA)

- Oct. 27-31, 2008 (Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN) and May 4-8, 2009 (Mt. Olivet Retreat Center, Farmington, MN)
- Nov. 5-9, 2007 and April 14-18, 2008 (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO)

The NALIP Basic Education curriculum is designed to intro-

duce clergy and lay professionals to the practice of intentional interim ministry. Although focusing on Lutheran theology and polity, the event is open to all lay leaders and clergy desiring and/or called to this special ministry in congregations during a pastoral transition.

(continued on page 7)

Advanced Interim Basics

ADVANCED BASICS

September 22-24, 2008 - Olmsted Manor Retreat Center at Ludlow, PA

Olmsted Manor Retreat Center
Route 6
Ludlow, PA 16333
(80 miles east of Erie, PA)

This course will update your Basic Education in the Practice of Intentional Interim Ministry by:

- Revitalizing your ministry in order to become more intentional in the transition processes of a congregation experiencing pastoral leadership change
- Increasing your understanding about the "Body of Christ" as an "emotional system" and how this understanding affects the interim pastor's ministry in a congregation in pastoral transition

- Walking through the interim period by utilizing the Transition Team

Experiencing more with the Developmental Tasks, "LifeStories", conflict, power and the Leadership Learning Wheel

LEADER

The Rev. Andrew E. Carlsson
Retired Intentional Interim
Pastor [More Information](#)

<http://nalip.net/>

Here's a thought...

Print an extra copy of this newsletter and share it with someone interested in interim ministry.

Basic Education for Intentional Interim Ministry (con't)

(continued from page 6)

This course is designed in three phases (Planting, Cultivating, and Harvesting) covering a period of about six months. The first and third phases are in-residence, beginning at noon on Monday and concluding at noon on Friday with a total of at least 60 contact hours.

Phase I (Planting) is a residential week focusing on the theory, theology, leadership skills and congregational systems related to intentional interim ministry. We examine the interim journey through scenarios (propositional learning)

including the dynamics of entry, pre-entry, stages and tasks of the congregation, emotional systems, conflict, grief, power structures, and leadership skills necessary to lead the congregation, and exiting/closure issues.

Phase II (Cultivating) is a six month experience in a parish or institutional setting, ideally in a leadership transition, in which the participant in this program "puts into practice" the material learned in Phase I. During this time, you will learn contracting (covenanting), work on personal learning

goals, and write two critical incident reports, all under the supervisor of your chosen fieldwork supervisor.

Phase III (Harvesting) is the second residential week in which through a group process you will share one of your critical incident reports, review material learned in Phase I, and learn more about the dynamics of congregations in pastoral transition, and your leadership skills and needs. You will also discuss the biblical and theological connections in this special ministry as specifically related to the Lutheran church.

Basic Education Scholarships

Amount of Scholarship

The Scholarship Fund will award \$300.00 to each qualifying candidate for a Basic Education Course sponsored by the National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors (NALIP).

Number of Scholarships

A maximum of 10 scholarship grants will be awarded each calendar year.

Application Process

Each applicant must complete a scholarship form that delineates the need for assistance. Applications for the scholarship may be obtained by writing to the NALIP Treasurer via

the internet at nalip.net@verizon.net or by United States Postal Service to National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors (NALIP), P.O. Box 4416, Bethlehem, PA 18018-0416.

More Information

<http://nalip.net/>



systemic behaviors driven by past practices rooted in fear? To be sure, intentional interim ministry has established itself as an essential building block to healthy ministry in many of our ELCA Synods. The ongoing challenge is to provide all congregations facing pastoral leadership change the opportunity to learn what the interim process is. I suspect that many congregations are yet facing the interim period mostly uninformed and unchallenged by the options and opportunities for growth that are now theirs because of the pastoral change that has occurred. (page 9)

A Time to Plant by Paul Svingen

As I enter month 17 of what will be a 19-month interim senior pastorate, and serving it less than ten city blocks from the congregation where Loren Mead and colleagues involved with Project Test Pattern did pioneering research in the mid 1970's to name and define intentional interim ministry, I am full of gratitude for those who saw and studied patterns in congregational life. Why were so many long pastorates followed by short pastorates? What was the cost to the church of unintentionally short

pastorates and the effect on pastors called to serve Christ within it? Of course we can never accurately measure that cost nor quantify it, but surely it was characterized by various expressions of loss that did not support the up-building of the body of Christ and its focus on the Great Commission.

So, what have we, the Church, been doing about ministry deficits caused congregations by pastoral leadership change done in the darkness of self-interest, denial of issues that are problems, and the force of

Book Review by David C. Newhart

Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times by Peter Steinke

If you are a reader of Peter Steinke you will read this book, if you have never read Peter Steinke, you should read this book. His writing is distinctive, in that he gives realistic examples to many of a variety of situations Pastors face in their congregations. This book is about leadership in the congregation and not just for Pastors.

Steinke has brought three facets of leadership and dissected each of them in his own multifaceted way. He starts with "The Leader's Presence" and "The Leader's Functioning" and "The Leader's Challenge."

In each of these three parts he helps the reader to understand how the Leader's actions and reactions establish a means of calming the anxiety in a variety of situations. Chapter 3 is entitled "The Nonanxious Presence". It is here that he helps the leader to realize how the lack of anxiety in a crisis can bring calm to all those who are going through stressful times. He does state directly, "Regulating anxiety to the point of having no anxiety is humanly impossible. Anxiety is always present; it is a fundamental human expression, even a healthy response to life. The nonanxious presence is

an anomaly, never a full-blown reality. It is intended to be a description of a way of being..." He quotes Romans 12:14 & 17 to help set a Biblical view of this mindset.

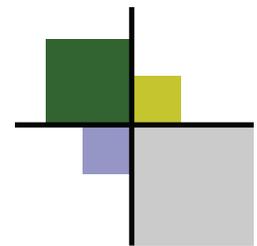
It is in Chapter 9 under the category, "The Leaders Challenges" that he speaks to the Leaders job of "Rocking the Emotional Boat" that Steinke makes some noteworthy comments. He writes, "The last people you would expect to create a general disturbance are the congregational leaders themselves. However, a time may come when you, the leader, will have to challenge the congregation, upsetting its balance." He points out that churches always are looking to keep things in place, calm and stable, don't rock the boat kind of theology. It is this sort of stability that can cause a congregation to become stale and not move forward. The situation in many congregations involves more work at keeping the status quo "homeostatis". It is this pattern that stops congregations from moving on and finding better, more efficient ways of interaction and communication.

Steinke helps the reader as a leader to understand how to work in today's world with a Biblical example. He chooses Moses and Aaron as the examples of two different types of leadership. Here

is what he says, "The Biblical story of two brothers, Moses and Aaron, leading the Israelites... provides a context to explore the difference between the leader who enjoys adventure and leader who automatically "makes nice" or worries about preserving the peace. At a dramatic point in Israel's history, we see Moses accepting challenge and Aaron committing to survival."

It is obvious that Peter Steinke is writing to help leaders in the church to be more effective. His past books dealt with the family systems, giving the reader a way of looking at the interaction of the variety of actions between persons in a church society. This book offers more direct aid for the leader in how to best use their skills to redirect a congregation into the right path.

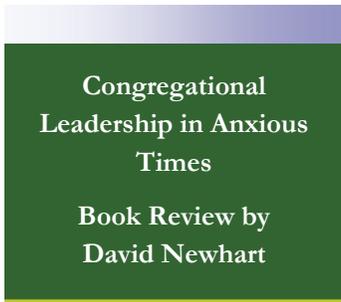
To gain insight into your way of leading a congregation and how an alternative method might help, read "Congregational Leadership In Anxious Times."



Introductory Regular or Associate Membership: \$50 [Current and former Regular and Associate Member annual dues for 2008 are \$50 per year]

Life and Associate Life Membership: Up to 55 years of age at \$450; ages 56 thru 60 at \$350; age 61 or older at \$250.

Applications are available on the Interim Ministry [Website](#). (also see last page)



Lifetime Memberships Now Available

The IMA Board approved lifetime Memberships beginning immediately.

Your membership supports a stronger voice of advocacy in the ELCA through the ELCA Conference of Bishops, synodical staffs, and the ELCA Church wide Office on behalf of intentional interim ministry. IMA raises the concerns of interim pastors facing frequent transitions to the ELCA Board of Pensions. IMA informs you of exceptional continuing education especially designed for

professionals. Your membership helps support an annual gathering of Lutheran interim leaders and synodical staff from across the country (and a few international participants) arranged by the National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors (NALIP) of which IMA is a member. The IMA also supports NALIP in its work of promoting basic and advanced training courses for interim ministers.

A Time to Plant by Paul Svingen (con't)

As has likely also been your experience, I met this morning with leaders of a neighboring congregation whose pastor of 23 years retires mid-summer. They knew that they wanted an interim senior pastor, but acknowledged that they had very little awareness of the work of an intentional interim pastor. It was a delight to sit among them and teach them about intentional interim ministry and the uniqueness of the transitional work of an intentional interim pastor. They were interested, interrogative, and quickly investing themselves in a new mental model of both the 'in-between time' and the work of the pastor who serves

in it. In so many aspects of it, intentional interim ministry becomes the curriculum for teaching God's people about 'church.' When I received my D. Min. degree at Luther Seminary nearly 20 years ago, Dr. David Tiede handed me the parchment, shook my hand, and said to me, "Now you are a teacher of the church." With or without a particular degree, I know that many of you who read this article have experienced this same 'teaching dimension' as you have practiced intentional interim ministry. What a privilege this ministry is!

As I conclude this current in-

terim, my 29th, I do so with the feeling that this one has been the most accomplished of them all. I have been able to experience adaptive leadership with a Transition Task Force whose 'grasp' of the mission of the interim period has been firm and strong. To many congregations I have said, "My work is to help the leaders lead." To see that phenomenon having happened again is a source of pure joy. It's all about Christ and equipping the saints for the work of ministry. It is not me and 'my' interim ministry. Thank God it's not about me.

**Thank God it is not
about me.**

Paul Svingen

Doctor of Ministry in Interim Ministry by Andy Carlsson

I shared with you in the last IMA-ELCA newsletter about my DMin program I'm taking at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia (LTSP). Let me be clear – the seminary does not offer a DMin in Interim Ministry. However, my focus and project is in Interim Ministry. Yours could be, too! I have now completed the eight courses required and now begin to work on my project thesis.

Most of the courses at LTSP are one week intensives, similar to our Basic Education program in NALIP and IMN. One of the courses I took last year was an exegetical study of Philippians taught by Dr. John Reumann. This was not an easy task, as those of you who have had an exegetical course with Dr. Reumann know! He was writ-

ing the translation and exegetical work on Philippians for the Anchor Bible. This class reviewed and critiqued his work! Well, we really exegete and study the Philippian letter.

I was challenged to defend my perspective that the church in Philippi was really in conflict in Paul's otherwise joyful congregation. Paul's emphasis on joy and thanksgiving were encouragements to this otherwise church in disunity. I also supported the idea the Timothy and Epaphroditus were often in the role of an "interim pastor" to the church in Philippi. I argued that Paul often assumed this role, and indeed was doing so by writing to the church. Scholars argue about how many letters are actually contained in the one we have in Scriptures. That

argument did not affect my study. Disunity and strife can be seen already in the first eleven verses of chapter one as Paul writes to "all of you". Thus, in verse 27, Paul calls "all of you" to live your life in such a way that supports the gospel of Christ. Paul's hymn in the second chapter is another call to unity, "be in the same mind". There is a suggestion that the conflict or disunity in the Philippian church focuses on Euodia and Syntyche, possibly two female leaders of the "house churches" in Philippi. They are a part of the disunity. However, there seems to be more disunity in this multi-congregation parish as noted in 3: 2 and following. Current study suggests that the church in Philippi was a (page 12)

When do we get a Real Pastor? By Richard Mathisen

We all encounter the question, “When do we get a REAL pastor?”

We all know that this question is not an attack on us personally, even if it feels like it. (“Hey, I *am* a REAL pastor!”) The question is merely a symptom of emotional trauma, the trauma generated within the congregation’s family system by the loss of the previous pastor.

We all know that it doesn’t do much good to respond to an emotional question with a rationalistic answer. If we try to answer this question by explaining the benefits of the Interim Process, our words are likely to fall on deaf ears.

More recently, I’ve tried to look at this question through the eyes of the typical congregation member. What does a typical congregation member see?

First, there is an obvious lack of a pastor. This is an objective perception. Yet, underlying this objective perception are several emotional issues. One issue, when a pastor is gone, is a fear that the member will not be able to get pastoral care if such care is needed.

I find it helpful to remind the congregation, repeatedly, that an intentional interim pastor is first and foremost a pastor. I do everything a regular pastor would do. I seek out opportunities to provide pastoral care, such as hospital visits and visit-

ing shut-ins at least once. In every newsletter, I ask to be informed of any needs for pastoral care.

Second, the typical congregation member feels an emotional loss to the family system. This loss will not be put right, in their mind, until a new permanent pastor is in place. So, when I am asked “When do we get a REAL pastor?” I try to turn the question around. I say, “Fine. Let’s start a search tomorrow. What type of a pastor are you looking for?” I’ve never yet had a reasonable answer. We know, as interims, there are vastly different types of pastors available, with vastly different strengths and weaknesses. Members often know that from their own experience. The only answer I’ve received is, “Well, we’ll know it when we see it.” At this point, I laugh. And they laugh, also. They’re going to start a search for a pastor without knowing what they’re looking for! I mean, it really is pretty silly, when you stop to think about it. That usually leads them to ask the obvious question, “What should we do now?”

What the congregation needs, of course, is a self-study process. Intentional interims should not forget that every ELCA congregation without a pastor is expected to go through a self-study process. The self-study process is not unique for intentional interims. The process goes back more than 50 years in my own personal knowledge, well before intentional interim ministers even existed.

The problem is that congregations were *supposed* to do the self-study, but often didn’t do it, or did an inadequate job.

I sometimes think my primary value as an interim is merely to force the congregation to do the self-study that they’re supposed to do anyway. I supply the guidance and prodding to get them to do the self-study process.

Why is a self-study needed? Because a congregation has a personality. When a pastor departs, the congregation has lost an important part of its personality. The congregation needs to determine who it is and what its mission from God is, before trying to replace the pastor.

Are pastors interchangeable? Nope! We all know that!

So, how do we respond to the question: “When do we get a REAL pastor?” One approach is to try to look at it from the standpoint of a typical congregation member. We can reassure them about pastoral care with words and actions. And we can turn the question back on them. What ARE they looking for in a pastor?

Dick Mathisen

Richard A. Mathisen is an intentional interim pastor in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA.



The typical congregation member feels an emotional loss to the family system.

2008 Interim Ministry Association Annual Report

This has been a remarkable year filled with new developments in Transitional Ministry in the ELCA. The three areas that I will highlight are Education, Advocacy, and Information.

Regarding education, two very important events since our last year's meeting included the interim gathering in the Grand Canyon Synod in September that was led by Pastor Larry Hand and Pastor Vickie Hall and the Texas Tri-Synod Interim Retreat in April. The purpose of both was to gather individuals involved in Interim Ministry in various capacities to encourage networking, training, and sharing of resources. The Grand Canyon Synod event was hosted by Bishop Stephen Talmage. In attendance in addition to Lutheran Interims were Presbyterians, Church of Brethren, Episcopal, and United Church of Christ. In the end the commitment was made to form geographical groups within the Synod to meet regularly to continue what was begun. The Texas Tri-Synod (North Texas-Northern Louisiana, Southwest Texas and Texas-Gulf Coast Synods) Retreat included not only trained intentional interims but also those without training serving as interims. In addition, there were those looking into the possibility of Interim Ministry. The Bishop's Assistants from the three Synods as well as the newly elected Texas-Gulf Coast Bishop, Michael W. Rinehart, were in attendance. The commitment was made that we would repeat this event annually as well as offer other local networking and support for those involved in Interim Ministry.

Regarding advocacy, in order to more effectively connect interims with congregations, especially those congregations experiencing conflict or trauma (end of a long-term pastorate, pastoral misconduct, or strife within the congregation), a concerted effort has been made to establish a point of contact within each Synod to lift up the valuable resource of Interim Ministry. To date twelve Synods have identified their points of contact. Currently, we are in the process of working to identify representatives at the nine regional levels to continue what we began at the Synod level.

Regarding information, IMA's quarterly newsletter, e-mailed to an audience of 1100, provides a vehicle to keep information current regarding Transitional Ministry. It offers resources in response to issues concerning interims, such as why interims cannot be available for call to the church they are serving. It also offers ministry opportunities for trained interims as well as changes that affect interims, such as the disability coverage that is now available to interim pastors between assignments. We have also published testimonials from Bishops regarding the value of interims within their Synod. A new monthly resource is "Constant Contact," which provides highlights of upcoming conferences and training opportunities. The IMA web site, only a year old, is receiving 300-400 hits per month and is under constant renewal and updating to keep pace with new resources for interims, churches and Synods.

To make life easier a Life-Time Membership is now being offered for a limited time. See Winter or Spring edition of the IMA Newsletter online for details.

I'd like to express my thanks to the membership as well as to the IMA Board for their efforts to improve and grow Interim Ministry as a valuable resource for the church at large. A very special thanks to Richard Brueschoff, Director for Lifelong Learning, Vocation and Education unit, ELCA who has provided insight, encouragement, hours and hours of support as well as connection to the ELCA.

Olin R. Knudsen, President IMA

Your IMA Board include: Cheryl Berg, Dan DeBlock, Keith Hammer, Jan Marvar, Richard Mathisen, and David Newhart

[Website Link \(New\)](#)



Interim ministry is primarily one of Word and Sacrament, but following the resignation or retirement of a congregation's pastor, the interim pastor can assist the congregation with the transition following an extended pastorate and often the resolution of recent or long-term conflicts. This ministry is usually done by a person who has received special interim ministry training.

The Interim Ministry Association of the ELCA (IMA) is a partner ministry of the ELCA, relating to this church through the Vocation and Education program unit. The IMA is the recognized "voice" of interim ministry practitioners within this Church.

Membership in the IMA is open to all ELCA rostered clergy and lay ministers, and to the rostered leaders of full communion partner denominations who serve ELCA congregations.

Contact ELCA Interim Ministry

We welcome your questions, comments, and interim ministry suggestions. The members of the [Interim Ministry Association Board](#) also serve congregations — and our addresses and phone numbers change regularly. The best ways to reach us are by e-mail or surface mail.

Mail

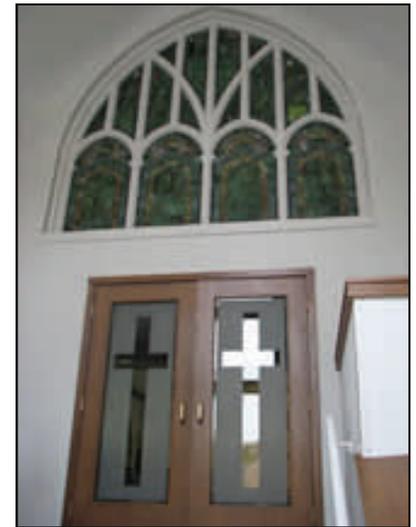
Interim Ministry Association
c/o ELCA Vocation and Education
8765 W Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4195

E-mail

For general questions or comments, please contact ve.info@elca.org.

E-mail Newsletter

imanewsletter@msn.com.



Doctor of Ministry in Interim Ministry (con't)



The Rev. Andrew E. Carlsson Co-founder and faculty member of NALIP

collection of several "house churches" and Euodia and Syntyche may have been leaders of different house churches. In 2:19 Paul mentions Timothy as one who will soon come and help Epaphroditus in the situation. This brief summary is only a sample of the study of the Philippian letter from the perspective that many of us deal with in interim ministry. As Paul attempts to work from a distance with the conflict in this church, he points to the suffering of Jesus Christ who set aside his "equality with God", etc. This "hymn" in chapter two

is a significant call to unity for them and also for us.

It was an interesting study, and helped me to better understand the role of the Apostle Paul and the situation in the church at Philippi. It might be a slight stretch, but I argued in my paper that the Apostle Paul utilized some of the concepts of interim ministry, challenging these early Christians to deal with their history, their leadership issues, their identity as a Christian community, the church at large, and prepare for the leadership of Epaphroditus with the support of

Timothy. You might want to read the letters with those thoughts in mind and see what you come up with.

Next time – "Luther and interim ministry"!

Pr. Andy Carlsson
Co-Founder of NALIP

Doctor of Ministry in
Interim Ministry

I would recommend it to
anyone over 65! (Even
those under 65).