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The Newsletter

Pastor Andy Carlsson Honored

Pastor Andy Carlsson, long-time intentional interim practitioner and teacher of Basic Education for both the Interim Ministry Network and National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors, received the Bishop Donald J. McCoid Order of Service award at the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly on June 12th. Andy is the second recipient of the award, established in 2007 upon the retirement of Bishop McCoid from the Southwestern Synod and, previously, the Western Pennsylvania-West Virginia Synod of the LCA. Nominations are made by the NWPA Synod staff and selected by the Executive Board. Pastor Carlsson was cited for his ministry in the synod and his work in NALIP as a pastor, teacher and encourager of solid ministry in the plurality of congregations of the ELCA, those with Sunday attendance of 50

or fewer, and in rural congregations, and for his leadership in intentional interim ministry. The Order of Service award is, "Granted to a rostered leader of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America who demonstrated the high ideal of service to the church through the steadfast and faithful manner so clearly demonstrated by the life and ministry of God's servant in whose name this order is conferred."

Congratulations to Andy for receiving this honor!



Special points of interest:

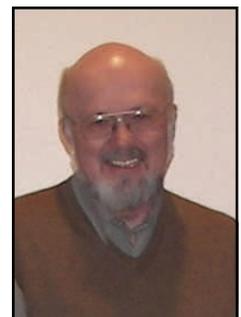
- Pastor Andy Carlsson Honored
- Pastor Paul Svingen Presenting
- Research Review by Roger Harms
- The Apprentice by David Newhart
- Study of Luther and Interim Ministry by Andy Carlsson
- A Bishop's Reflections on Interim Ministry by Bishop Donges

Pr Paul Svingen Presenting at SWMN

On August 7 from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm at the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Office, Pr Paul Svingen long term interim pastor and instructor will present insights and practice of the intentional interim. There will be opportunities for

interim candidates from outside to synod to interview with the staff. RSVP with the Synod office so that food arrangements can be made. There is a \$5 cost for the noon meal.

Email:
swmn.elca@ecunet.org





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 newsletter 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 is the one thing that Interims and Settled Pastors confront upon their arrival? Stewardship or lack thereof... In numerous conversations I hear something like... “There hasn’t been a Stewardship campaign in this

congregation in years.” The lack of meaningful Stewardship has only been outdone by the lack of the “E” word or Evangelism, also known as “Outreach.” According to Charles Lane, author of Ask, Thank, Tell, (an Augsburg Fortress Publication) Stewardship has been kidnapped and is being held hostage by a sinister villain named, “Paying the Bills.” It is really sad that we as the church have fallen so far

from our understanding of true commitment. Now Stewardship is about bucks whereas the biblical understanding is all about our commitment to Christ. Pastor John Bolt, former Region 4 Stewardship Resource, calls it Faith Raising rather than Fund Raising. Charles Lane uses the Marks of Discipleship listed in Mike Foss’ book Power Surge as a discipleship checklist to revive our relationship with Christ.

Prayer, Scripture Reading, *produced this wealth for me.* But Weekly Worship, Giving (to *remember the LORD your God, for the tithe and beyond*), Serving (to *remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to others in Jesus' Name, involve-* produce wealth, and so confirms his ment in small groups and I *covenant, which he swore to your would add INVITE. Charles forefathers, as it is today.* Lane suggests that in Genesis 1:27-28,

"be fruitful and multiply...have dominion," God delegated the crown of creation, humankind, to have the responsibility to be the stewards, not the owners of creation. Psalm 24:1-3, reminds us, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it..." Finally, Deuteronomy 8:11-18, *"Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have*

Lack of Stewardship in the congregation, especially an accurate biblical approach, is not turned quickly. In many cases churches have chosen to "low key" or totally ignore Stewardship. Usually it is addressed only when there is a slump in giving or once a year on "Stewardship Sunday." Many, including pastors, have been reluctant to mention Stewardship because it has often been heard as \$tewardship.

Here is what I have found that helps the congregation move to a healthier place and understanding. First is year round stewardship. Have members share once a month what giving has meant to them. A stewardship testimonial! I have also found it helpful to receive a monthly special offering to be given away to some cause outside the congregation. Thanks to my good friend Pastor John Bolt, who calls the monthly special offering a "Noisy Offering." Folks are encouraged to save their change but of course we accept the quiet stuff too!



Article plus pictures from Habitat Home ground breaking and noise offering.



Research Review by Roger Harms

“A Study of the Effectiveness of Interim Pastors”

From the Research Services of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), September 11, 2007

This survey was requested by the Association of Presbyterian Interim Ministry Specialists. I believe that the results of the survey could have similar results if it were conducted in the Lutheran Church. This survey gives valuable information on the effectiveness of interim pastors. The presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church may be more intentional about making the intentional interim ministry program work than are some synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It seems to me that the involvement of the presbytery committees on ministry also strengthens the program for Presbyterians. The full report with the 6 page summary, and the full details of the responses can be found at

www.pcusa.org/research/downloads/interimpastors.pdf

The survey was conducted at the end of 2006 with 318 Presbyterian congregations that had an interim pastor at the end of 2004. Separate similar surveys were available to the clerks of sessions at the congregations, the pastors who followed the interim, the presbytery executives and the chairs of the presbytery committees on ministry. The response rate for each of these groups was between 55% and 65%. A short summary of some of the responses to the survey are included here.

Among the clerks and pastors, when asked if, “in general, it was a good idea that

your congregation had an interim”, 69% of both groups responded, ‘yes, a very good idea’, and another 22/21% responded ‘yes, a good idea.’ The clerks and pastors both responded over 50% (‘to a great extent’ and ‘to some extent’) (the clerks were usually at least 15% higher) that the interims “helped the congregation 1) get ready for the change that comes with a new pastor, 2) identify problem areas, 3) review the needs of the congregation, and 4) successfully deal with problem areas.” In several other areas, the survey also showed that the interim pastors gave significant help.

The presbytery executives and chairs were asked about special situations when they thought it was beneficial to call an interim pastor. Each group responded in the range of 61% to 84% that in the following situations it was ‘always beneficial’. In each of these situations, when ‘always beneficial’ and ‘sometimes beneficial’ were added, the total responses were in the range of 93% to 100%. The responses were to the following situations (in order from most beneficial to lesser): “When 1) a pastor leaves under duress, 2) a congregation is experiencing significant conflict, 3) the pastor dies unexpectedly, 4) a pastor who served the church for many years retires, and 5) the senior pastor of a multi-staff congregation leaves.” The situation of “when a pastor who served the church for many years accepts another call” was very close to the others.

The executives and chairs each responded with over 70% (‘strongly agree’ and

‘agree’) that “interim pastors 1) help congregations deal with the grieving process when a beloved pastor leaves, 2) help to empower the congregation’s laity, 3) are helpful in preparing a congregation to accept change that inevitably comes with a new pastor, and 4) provide stability during pastoral transitions”. They rate another 5 items to be helpful above 60% positive. They also responded with 92% (‘strongly agree’, and ‘agree’) that “it requires many years of experience in ministry to be effective in interim ministry”. By numbers of 72% and 80% they believe that “healthy congregations usually do not need an interim pastor.” They also say that serving as an effective interim does not require specialized training, but by 94% and 95% they say that (‘always’ and ‘usually’) they prefer “interim pastors with education/training in interim ministry.”

The above information includes some of the parts of this survey of Presbyterians that show that trained interim ministers are very beneficial to congregations, especially in certain situations that call for a little more time to prepare the congregation for the arrival of a newly called pastor. I believe that this study can be helpful for synod bishops and congregational leaders in the Lutheran church who are considering the use of a trained interim pastor. Again, I encourage people to download the full study.

Roger Harms, Intentional Interim Pastor, Christ Lutheran Church, Sharon, Pennsylvania

In case you have not heard of this, the Presbyterians have done "[A Study of the Effectiveness of Interim Pastors](http://www.pcusa.org/research/downloads/interimpastors.pdf)", published in September of 2007.

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

Healthy Congregations National Gathering October 13-15, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio

This series of one-day seminars is for persons who want to broaden their perspective in self, family, and workplace through the lens of Bowen theory—commonly called family systems theory or systems thinking.

Experience has shown that systems thinking cannot be learned from reading about the theory but application of theory can be enhanced by working with a coach over an extended period.

The eight concepts of Bowen Family Systems Theory will guide the process of learning. Responsibility for learning rests upon each individual.

Who Can Benefit?

This series of seminars is for leaders—pastors and leaders in religious organizations, school principals, superintendents, business leaders—who want to enrich, deepen, and otherwise expand the ability to apply

principles of thinking about self, family, and workplace.

Theoretical Concepts

Each one-day session will develop theoretical concepts via:

- Presentation and discussion of theoretical concepts of Bowen theory,
- Application of theory in one's family and,
- Application of theory in the workplace.

www.hcongregations.net/

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

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/>

Book Review: *The Myth of the Shiksa and Other Essays*

Pr. Dan DeBlock

The Myth of the Shiksa by Edwin H Friedman is a welcome edition to *Generation to Generation* and *A Failure of Nerve*. The book is edited by his daughter Shira Friedman Bogart. Friedman's wit and playfulness is evident as he goes straight for the core of human relationships.

The late Edwin Friedman was an ordained rabbi and practicing family therapist.

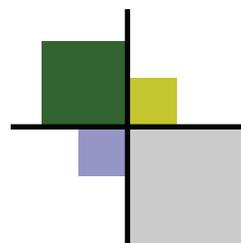
"Why did I give advice to Eve instead of going directly to

Adam? I knew I would never be able to stop the Creator's overall plan, but I thought I might really be able to frustrate it if I could screw up some relationships." So speaks Satan as The First Family Counselor in this new book by Edwin Friedman's.

Throughout his life, Friedman eloquently applied the insights of family therapy to churches and synagogues, rectors and rabbis, politicians and teachers, and his humor, sense of paradox, and unique style of story-

telling were trademarks of his teaching style.

Certainly a good read for those who enjoy the previous writings of Edwin Friedman.



The Apprentice by David C. Newhart Chair of NALIP

I have now completed my first week of being an apprentice in the basic Training Education program of NALIP. I am apprenticed to one of the founders of the educational program of the IMN as well as NALIP, Andy Carlsson. Our venue was Gettysburg Seminary in Pennsylvania, a lovely place and wonderful summer weather. Andy and I shared the teaching material, although he taught the hard stuff and left me with the easy stuff, we share almost equally all that was to be taught. Andy did an outstanding job in gaining the respect and trust of the class immediately. He also did an outstanding job of keeping me in check. He made certain that I covered all the material that the students needed to know and not go over time to cut off the next instruction period. Although that happened a few times early in the sessions, I became accustomed to limit

my time of talking and instructing to the time he allotted me for each period.

We had fifteen students, all of varying backgrounds and ages and genders. They ranged from five women and ten men, to almost recently ordained to those ready for retirement. The scope of their experience, as they shared it with each other, was wide. These students came from a wide range of places, most from Pennsylvania, but also Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois. They brought with them their regional experiences as well as their varied polity from their individual Synods. This was a very eager group, eager to learn, eager to engage each other in conversation.

The classes are taught morning noon and night until 9PM or later except for Wednesday night, a night off for student and teachers. As Andy said,

“We will have a break from the kids on Wednesday night.” We had a group of fifteen students who were ready to learn, to question, to engage each other, the week passed with great vigor. The students made it easy for all of us to learn together about the situations we have been in and how we shared our mutual wisdom.

This was the best Interim Ministry basic training class I have ever taught, noting that of course it was the first class I have ever taught. I shall look forward to keeping in contact with seven of these students for the next six months as they complete Phase II. I most certainly will look forward to being with them in Phase III at Gettysburg Seminary in January. I know that the future of Interim Ministry is going to be very strong if this class of students continues to serve in our ministry specialty.

This was the best...class I ever taught...this was the first class I ever taught.
by
David Newhart

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 Lutheran intentional interim 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.

Lifetime memberships only available for a short time. Act soon if you plan to join.

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](#).

The Apprentice (Photo's) by David C. Newhart Chair of NALIP



Pictures of students from the classroom of David Newhart

A Study of Luther and Interim Ministry by Andy Carlsson

One of the more interesting and challenging courses in my DMin program was with Professor Gerald Christianson at Gettysburg Seminary. Although the course was entitled “Luther and Augustine”, I focused my research on Luther and interim ministry with minor reference to St. Augustine. One of our colleague intentional interim pastors, Dirk Reek, had submitted his STM thesis at Concordia, St. Louis in 2000 on “the Divine Call and Intentional Interim Ministry in the LCMS”, so I knew there was some material to study in Luther’s writings.

As one attempts to study the issue of the ministry in Luther and in the Lutheran Confessions, one is immediately confronted with the issue of “the call” and who has (and possibly when) the right to preach and teach publicly. The answer in Article XIV is one who is “regularly called”. Gunther Gassmann and Scott Hendrix indicate that the “Latin phrase used here, *rite*

vocatus, refers traditionally to ordination. Article 14 of the Apology also confirms that CA 14 is referring to ordination....The interpretation according to which CA 5 refers to the common ministry of all the baptized while CA 14 refers to the public, ordained ministry has not found general agreement.”¹

In his popular commentary on the *Augsburg Confession* James A. Nestingen notes a “three-way tug-of-way among



pastors, congregations and bishops” is within the AC, but he suggests contrary to Gassmann and Hendrix that “Article 14 insists that the min-

istry belongs to the congregation, not to pastors or bishops”.² The lack of agreement on this theological perspective has only begun.

Leif Grane suggests that Article 14 does not give us the answer, but that we have to pursue the idea in Luther’s *To the Christian Nobility*. Grane writes:

“The issue is first and foremost the call. By avoiding any mention of the teaching of the priesthood of all believers, the AC has suppressed an important premise in Luther’s perspective on the ministry. It is precisely on the basis of this idea that Luther, in *To the Christian Nobility*, justifies the congregation’s right to intervene when confronted by the failure of the ministry.”³

We now have set

Doctor of Ministry in Interim Ministry
I would recommend it to anyone over 65! (Even those under 65).

A Study of Luther and Interim Ministry by Andy Carlsson

before us the issue of who may rightly call someone to the office of ministry. What has this to do about interim ministry in the Lutheran Church? Grane takes us a further step as he discusses the issues and Luther's response in *That a Christian Assembly or Congregation Has the Right and Power to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture*. This treatise is in response to citizens of the town of Leisnig requesting Luther's opinion about the conflict between them and the abbot of Buch. The abbot was not supportive of the Reformation and refused to allow the parish to select its own priest and preacher. In response to this issue Luther utilizes several scriptural passages, but focuses on First Corinthians 14. In summary he says:

“Let this passage be your sure foundation, because it gives such an overwhelming power to the Christian congregation to preach, to permit preaching, and to call. Especially if there is a need, it calls everyone with a special call – without a call from men – so that we should have no doubt that the congregation which has the gospel may and should elect and call from among its members someone to teach the word in its place.”

Scholars have debated whether Luther placed the ordained ministry above or below the authority of the congregation. Some scholars support the argument that Luther changed his emphasis during his time, especially after 1525.

The German theologian, Gert Haendler, in his book *Luther on Ministerial Office and Congregational Function* has done a significant study of Luther's view of the relationship between the ordained ministry and its relationship to the ministerial function of the congregation. In the Introduction to this book, the editor, Eric W. Gritsch, suggests that Haendler tackles three questions in his study. The first question was significant for my paper: “To what extent was Luther's thought shaped by his pastoral dealings with certain congregations which faced problems of transition from medieval Roman Catholicism to the Reformation?”

Gritsch points out that Luther believed the congregation shares in the work of ministry, and that the congregation was the guardian of the freedom of the gospel. He summarizes Luther's thought saying: “there is no ordination without a ‘call’ (*Berufung*). Ordination is the call to function in the ministry as one Christian who has been chosen by other Christians to serve in public. The holder of the office of the ministry does not receive a special charism, an ‘indelible character’ (*character indelebilis*), as medieval canon law taught. Thus the power of ordination ceases when there is no longer a call to work in the ministry of Word and sacraments. That is why Luther insisted on an active ministry on the part of both ‘officeholders’ (*Amtstrager*) and congregations.”⁴

In summary it can be said that Luther considered the office of the ministry a function, divinely instituted, and focusing on the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. However, who may or should make the call to the office of ministry, and whether or not there is any implied permanence in that call, continues to be a subject unresolved.

Although Luther, the Lutheran Confessions and other Lutheran reformers seem to agree that a call is important in the proclamation of the gospel, there seems to be a difference of opinion about from whom and when that call can be made. Dirk Reek in his thesis for STM at Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) notes that Robert Preus wrote in *The Doctrine of the Call in the Confessions and Lutheran Orthodoxy*: “The call is always permanent. The notion of a temporary call is inconceivable in the nature of the case, and, therefore, the matter is not even considered by Luther or the Confessions or any Lutheran theologian.”

While neither the Lutheran Confessions nor Luther maintain any agreement about who shall make the call, the ELCA in its “Guidelines for Interim Pastoral Ministry” produced by the Division for Ministry and approved by the Church Council of the ELCA, November 8-11, 1996, states: “An interim pastor may either be appointed by the synod bishop or may serve under a term call extended by the Synod Council.” It is to be noted here that the congregation does not make this “call”, although the congregation concurs with the appointment or call. Also the call may be for only a certain period of time. It is interpreted that in the pastoral transition time, the congregation shall have an appropriately called person to the ministry of Word and sacrament. This, of course, is the primary function of any ministry in the church.

Can someone be called to a situation which seems to be an emergency or of great need? In his response to the congregation in Leisnig Luther in reflection on First Corinthians 14: 30 responds with these words: “If then St. Paul says here that anyone from the midst of the Christians may come forward if there is a need and calls him through such a word of God, and tells the other to withdraw and deposes him by the power of his word, how much more right does a whole congregation have to call someone into this office when there is a need, as there always is, especially now!

Endnotes

1 Gunther Gassmann and Scott Hendrix, *Fortress Introduction to the Lutheran Confessions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 125.

2 James A. Nestingen, *The Faith We Hold*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983), 63.

3 Leif Grane, *The Augsburg Confession – A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), 70.

4 Gert Haendler, *Luther on Ministerial Office and Congregational Function* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) 62-63.

5 “Guidelines for Interim Pastor Ministry”, Church Council of the ELCA, 1996.

Pr. Andy Carlsson

Co-Founder of NALIP

A BISHOP'S REFLECTIONS ON INTERIM MINISTRY

As the retiring bishop of the South Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I have been asked to reflect on interim ministry from a bishop's perspective of oversight. Interim Ministry is normally defined as ministry between the times: between the times a pastor ends his or her ministry with a congregation and the time when a new pastor is called and begins his or her ministry in the new ministry setting. Intentional Interim Ministry, at least according to some definitions, is ministry required to restore a congregation to health if that congregation is in conflict or is dysfunctional or so unhealthy that it would be inappropriate, at best, or foolhardy, at least, to begin a call process for a new pastor. Normally, although not always, intentional interim pastors have special training and expertise in conflict resolution and special gifts for bringing healing to conflicted or dysfunctional situations. In either case, interim ministry is invaluable in the ongoing life of congregations and synods and we would all suffer immeasurably without interim pastors, whether intentional or not.

Through years of experience in the church we have learned that it is not usually wise for a new pastor to begin ministry the day the former pastor leaves, which is in contrast to the common secular practice of having one CEO take office the same day the former CEO leaves office. We've learned that it is important for the health of the congregation for there to be an interim period

of at least six months and up to a year following a long pastorate. One rule of thumb is that a congregation should be in an interim status for one month for each year the former pastor had served. An extreme example I encountered was a congregation who had been served by the same pastor for thirty six years before his untimely death just weeks before his anticipated retirement. This formula would have had the congregation in an interim status for three and a half years! Normally we suggest six to nine months or until the congregation is ready to begin a formal search and call process. For very conflicted or dysfunctional situations we recommend a year or more of intentional interim ministry.



In reality, any called pastor who follows a long pastorate can easily become what some call an "unintentional interim." This means that he or she realizes this after a couple to three years and leaves having, in effect, served as an interim pastor.

For us in South Carolina, blessed with a large cadre of retired pastors who desire to

continue to serve the church, most interim appointments are made from this group. Once in a while we appoint a pastor who is on leave from call to interim ministry and occasionally bring in an intentional interim pastor from outside the synod. In any case, while the interim has the full authority of a called pastor, there are two things an interim cannot do: be available for call in that congregation or influence the call process. While the appointment of an interim is my responsibility as bishop, we work closely with congregational leadership. I would not attempt to appoint a pastor who doesn't want to serve a particular congregation nor would I try to appoint a pastor that the congregation doesn't want as an interim. In this endeavor as in any aspect of life in the church, working together to determine appropriate interim ministry usually serves the church very well. Interims are under direct contract with the congregation being served and the details of those contracts are worked out between the congregation and the pastor, following our suggested guidelines and advice. Normally contracts are drawn up for six months with the possibility of contracting for an additional six months or more.

I regard our interim pastors as unsung heroes of the church. Without their willingness and availability to serve, I'm not sure how we would shepherd congregations in the transitional time between called pastors.

Bishop Donges

I regard our interim pastors as unsung heroes of the church.
Bishop Donges

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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.

Please add our link to your Synod website.

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

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c/o ELCA Vocation and Education
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E-mail

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

E-mail Newsletter

imanewsletter@msn.com.



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