

geographical areas or synods, regular support groups help keep us at a healthy functioning level and sustain us when our energies and spirits are challenged.

- **You can have a voice.** Via IMA, we can raise a collective voice to address needs, share insights, and plan new directions. The health of the Church and the health of synods depend on the health of local congregations. Through board or committee work, you can have a hand in shaping communication and teaching materials for interim ministers, synod staff and congregations. *You can make a difference* through the IMA that you cannot accomplish alone.

- **We need you.** Your membership dues help support the work of the IMA board, the NALIP education program and the Annual Conference. Your input helps the Board address the concerns of today's interims within the ELCA as interim ministry continues to grow and evolve.

- **Some tangible benefits** include
 - ✓ the IMA newsletter
 - ✓ a discounted member rate for the NALIP Annual Conference (which offers an in-depth topic led by a single presenter)
 - ✓ the option to be included on the Availability listing when you're seeking a new assignment

Today interim pastors—including you—are benefiting from the work of many gifted pioneers in this relatively new ministry specialty. But it is still growing and developing. By becoming a member of the Interim Ministry Association of the ELCA, you will be part of a dedicated ministry community, and your voice and gifts will sustain and build on that early work. We both give and receive grace and blessing, and we invite you to join us.

Membership dues are \$50.00 per calendar year. They can be sent to:
Interim Ministry Association Treasurer
ELCA Vocation and Education Program Unit
8765 Higgins Road, Chicago, Illinois 60631

Information & Communication:

Write to IMA President at the above address, or email to VE.info@elca.org and include Interim Ministry in the subject line.



MEMBERSHIP IN AN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEAGUES

How it all began

In the early years of interim ministry, there was little in the way of structure, support or networking for those pastors who felt called to be healers and midwives of anxious congregations in the interim time. Synod offices were often not equipped to recommend more than supply pastors while congregational call committees rushed to do their work.

The need for community

In time, individual interim pastors began to network for encouragement, support and skill building. The special concerns of intentional interim ministers, plus institutional issues such as movement across synods or regions, just compensation, roster and call status, and insurance coverage occupied their meetings. Personal concerns also arose: training, income & insurance coverage between interim assignments, self-care and family issues. It was soon discovered that basic education classes were much like seminary intro courses: tantalizing, but more substance and breadth were needed. And Lutherans also felt the need for more theological depth as well as guidance in negotiating church polity.

Lutherans in the upper Midwest were the first to develop a structured organization. The Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors of Region 3 (ALIP 3) was formed for support and accountability. Their model was expanded into NALIP, the “National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors,” at an annual interim conference in 1994. A board drawn from the 9 regions of the ELCA was formed, a constitution and mission statement were adopted, and membership grew. NALIP appealed to the ELCA Division for Ministry and Office of the Bishop for recognition and guidelines for interim ministry. The Office of the Secretary prepared guidelines in a report prepared for the Conference of Bishops in 1996.

Pan-Lutheran developments

District Presidents of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod were convinced of the value of interim ministry to the health of congregations and watched the ELCA process with interest. One LCMS interim pastor was appointed to the NALIP board, and ELCA interim leaders were invited to advise the LCMS as it laid the foundation for interim ministry in the Synod. Soon a board was organized, then structure and accountability which enabled that church body and its interim pastors to deal with polity issues and relationships. The new structure became the Interim Ministry Conference of the LCMS (IMC-LCMS). In order to better serve the Lutheran bodies, pastors and congregations, in 2001 two organizational changes were adopted. A new organization was developed for ELCA interims and their specific concerns, the

Interim Ministry Association of the ELCA (IMA-ELCA). Interim pastors then became members of their denominational association. The “new NALIP” is now a Coordinating Council made up of an equal representation drawn from members of the LCMS and ELCA associations. Its mission is to offer interim education, an annual conference, and other tasks as directed.

What does the IMA do?

Since its formation, the IMA has become “*The Voice of Interim Ministry in the ELCA*,” and serves as a link between interim pastors and the churchwide organization. This link, via the Vocation and Education program unit, was officially recognized in the 2007 ELCA yearbook. A representative of Vocation and Education participates in IMA board meetings and the Annual Meeting, and shares the perspectives of the Conference of Bishops with the organization. In turn, the IMA advises Vocation and Education on interim matters.

The IMA drafts interpretative materials on interim ministry for congregations, pastors, and synod staff; advocates for the special concerns of interim pastors; participates through NALIP in offering theologically and practically sound interim education; and currently is working on suggested guidelines for interim ministry practices for synods. IMA (and its predecessor) worked with the Board of Pensions to “unbundle” the pension/benefits package, and advocated for disability coverage for interims in the gap between assignments.

Why join the IMA?

- **You’re part of a special ministry.** Intentional interim pastors cannot—should not—be “Lone Rangers.” The interim time following a pastor’s departure offers an excellent opportunity to do the creative and necessary work to both address the past and prepare for the future. In addition to all the tasks and challenges of pastoral ministry that we share with other rostered pastors, IIM is a specialized ministry of healing, change and renewal. The interim process requires a timeline and a mindset that enables significant work to be done in a limited time span. The process and vocabulary may not be understood by colleagues in regular called ministry, but other IP’s “speak your language.”
- **You’re going to need support.** Networking and support are essential to maintaining pastoral health as we move from congregation to congregation, across districts and conferences, sometimes across synods and regions. Significant relationships are formed and nurtured within the network of the IMA, where we meet annually in person and then stay connected via the newsletter and email. Within our