

UNITED CENTERS FOR SPIRITUAL LIVING

# Interim Ministry Handbook

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For Ministers and Communities in Transition

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## Introduction

Welcome to the exciting and rewarding world of Interim Ministry. This handbook describes a new formalized program developed by United Centers for Spiritual Living (UCSL) to lift the field of Interim Ministry to its rightful place in our organization. With this program, interim ministry becomes more than finding a minister to “fill-in” while a pulpit vacancy is being filled in a community. It lifts Interim Ministry to the level of a formal program with qualified professionals with the proper training a focus to accomplish specific tasks that create the fertile soil for communities and ministers to thrive in their new relationships together.

Many have contributed to the development of this program, including Rev. Ron Fox, Rev. Lani Wynn Hampton, Rev. Barbara Hays, Dr. Kathy Hearn, the entire Ecclesiastical Representative group, led by Rev. Casey Gryba, and Michael Auch. In addition to those listed here, many have worked over the years to bring interim ministry to fruition in UCSL. We stand on these many shoulders.

This handbook is also largely indebted to the work done by the Association of Unity Churches and specifically to the work they did in creating a manual for Transitional Ministry. This handbook borrows liberally from that manual.

We have also used some material from the International Centers for Spiritual Living (ICSL) manual for interim ministry.

Finally, much gratitude is owed to the many other denominations that have laid the groundwork for interim ministry through their many decades, if not centuries, of building spiritual communities.

I very strongly believe that this formalized program of Interim Ministry will immensely expand the health of our communities as we consciously manage the transitions from minister to minister in our spiritual communities.

It is my great prayer that this handbook will serve all the ministers and spiritual communities that use it in the greatest way in their service to humanity and all of life.

In loving and joyous service,

Rev. Gregory Toole  
Ecclesiastical Leader

## **The Basis of Interim Ministry**

Healthier transitions make for healthier spiritual communities. One thing we have come to see is that much of creating healthy communities is about how we make the major transitions in that community. When a minister leaves or some other major change occurs, this presents both a peril and an opportunity. The opportunity is in the fact that change represents a beautiful opportunity for growth and moving the ministry to a new level of expression. The peril is that major change brings with it grief, anger, fear, chaos, and many other aspects that require some conscious attention in order to reap the ultimate benefits that can arise from change. If not handled with a high consciousness of spiritual truth and loving support, the spiritual community can deteriorate on many levels.

If not handled consciously, often the legacy of the poor management of the transition can follow the community for years to come, and sometimes decades. It often shows up as unhealthy relations with minister after minister until the underlying healing and conscious attention is brought by a skilled transition specialist.

This handbook addresses the major change that takes place when a senior minister (the senior spiritual leader of the community) leaves a community.

Communities whose minister leaves can benefit from an interim minister to facilitate healing, clarity, release, forgiveness, visioning, and ultimate clearing to become ready for a new minister.

The earlier we catch centers in their pulpit vacancy the greater likelihood of strong financial resources. Often the departure of a minister creates a degree of chaos due to a vacuum in leadership. The shorter the timeframe for this vacuum, the more likely the community can remain fairly intact. Of course, in some cases the reason for the minister's departure is that the community already began to have issues, often leading to financial hardship. In these cases, the sooner an interim minister can be hired to create a sense of stability the better.

## **The Interim Ministry Program**

The Interim Ministry program is an evolving program whose time has come. United Centers for Spiritual Living has learned from its past history that we can manage the transitions of communities in a much more conscious and healthy manner.

To that extent this program is now formalized to create the proper training and guidance, both for Interim Ministers and spiritual communities in transition. While the program is still in its infancy, it can have a great impact right now simply because we continue to collect the best learning about interim ministry and bring it to light with our communities having pulpit vacancies.

One key aspect of the program is formalized training and pre-qualification of interim ministers. This aspect of the program ensures that interim ministers have the greatest chance for success when entering a community as an interim minister.

Further, there are formal agreements made by the interim minister, the congregation, and UCSL that bring clarity and focus to the assignment. This makes interim ministry a focused activity with clear objectives, and therefore the assignment has a clear beginning and end. The assignment ends when the objectives have been met. The objectives are aligned with where the community needs to be for the healthiest possibility with a new permanent minister.

### **Purpose and Duties of an Interim Minister**

The interim minister is there to accomplish specific things, including but not limited to the following:

- Healing, including releasing the past, forgiveness, giving voice to current and past concerns, etc.
- Facilitating community conversations and dialogue.
- Visioning: Reconnecting the spiritual community to its vision, including a re-assessment of the current fit of that vision.
- Working with the leadership including the practitioner core, board/core council, and ministry/committee leaders to prepare the center for moving forward with a new minister, including financial readiness and organizational readiness (e.g., structures, processes).
- Providing stability in the spiritual community by presenting the Sunday talk 2-4 times per month and teaching key classes, such as Foundational, and supervising the teaching of all other classes.
- Providing ecclesiastical leadership in such areas as education planning, pastoral care, music ministry, and addressing the overall spiritual needs of the spiritual community.

- Lead the congregation in visioning and co-creation when they are ready to begin the process of hiring a permanent minister.
- Officiating at weddings, memorials, etc. and providing pastoral counseling and care.
- Report on status of center during the Interim period shall be submitted to the Ecclesiastical Representative or designated party.

The healing component is arguably one of the most important components to the Interim Minister's role. Its importance cannot be overemphasized. One only need look at communities where the necessary healing work during transitions was not done to see that without this healing work, we end up with tremendously unhealthy communities that seem to continue with dysfunction through the hiring of many different ministers.

Healing work during this time of transition, if deeply and competently facilitated, can create the healthy environment that a newly hired minister deserves to step into, and one that allows for the greatest possibility of success for the newly hired minister.

## **Qualifications of an Interim Minister**

As an introduction to this section, here is a quote from the Unity manual on interim ministry:

*“Candidates for transitional training must have shown success in field ministry, including skills in administration, conducting effective worship services and working effectively with boards, committees and volunteers. A minimum of three years in field ministry is recommended.”*

*“Interim Ministry is not for marginally successful or inexperienced ministers. It is for ministers who like challenges and variety, but who do not relish long-term maintenance and pastoral functions.”*

The most desirable qualifications are ordination, several years of successful senior ministry, great facilitation skills, and great healing consciousness.

Specific qualifications (modeled on ICSL Interim Ministry proposal):

- Ordained minister who has led one or more churches for a minimum of 3 years (and ideally 7-plus years).
- Highest ethics and professionalism.
- Ability to relate well to individuals and groups, establish trust relationships, listen well and keep confidences.
- Commitment to strengthen congregation's ties with UCSL.
- Skills in helping deal with anger, confusion and grief, affecting reconciliation on all levels.
- Proven conflict management skills.
- Demonstration of ability to support a congregation in its evolution.
- Ability to enable a congregation to sort out feelings about itself, its previous minister, UCSL relationship, and the next minister, in order to believe in itself, its potential and its future.
- Willingness to receive prescribed training and coaching.

## **UCSL Training for Interim Ministers**

The first information session will occur at Asilomar 2009, at which time those interested in interim ministry will learn about UCSL's new program. At this session individuals will be invited to apply to become a certified Interim Minister through UCSL.

The training, among other topics, will include the following:

- The role and purpose of interim ministry
- Duties and responsibilities of an interim minister
- Group facilitation skills
- Peacemaking skills
- Working with boards/core councils
- Working with practitioner cores
- Addressing the needs of the congregation in transition
- Visioning and co-creation

- Fear-to-Faith process
- Guidelines and policies for interim ministry

These training sessions will be conducted via teleconferences and webinars.

### **How and When Interim Ministers Are Recommended for Spiritual Communities?**

We are in the process of developing and training a cadre of certified interim ministers. When a center has a pulpit vacancy, they will immediately be approached by their Ecclesiastical Representative (ER) to begin discussion around an interim minister. The ER in conjunction with the department of Growth, Expansion and Ministerial Support (GEMS) and the Ecclesiastical Leader of UCSL would recommend an IM for that particular community. The community would be encouraged to hire that IM, but ultimately the community itself led by its board/core council would make the final hiring decision.

Ultimately, as the Interim Ministry program develops further, UCSL will establish a budget to subsidize paying interim ministers as the centers that need it most often don't have the full resources to pay for it. The subsidizing of IM salaries will also make UCSL a stronger partner with the community in their success toward being a healthy community. The full funding to support communities with Interim Ministry is not currently available, however, the Ecclesiastical Leader in conjunction with the ER and GEMS are available to support the community in developing a mutually beneficial relationship with an interim minister.

### **Length of Interim Ministry**

There are many views on how long an interim minister needs to perform his/her work, ranging from three months to 18 months. Ultimately, it is something to be evaluated on a case by case basis, with the average period of interim ministry being six to twelve months. A center needing deep healing work (e.g., one with a long history of dissension and/or instability) would require more time than a center with a relatively healthy history (e.g., with a minister retiring). The need for a particular center will be assessed by the ER, GEMS, and Ecclesiastical Leader, in conjunction with the board/core council of the center. This will also include an assessment of exactly what needs to be accomplished for that community to be ready for a permanent minister.

## **Compensation and Benefits of Interim Ministers**

It is expected that Interim Ministers be paid a salary consistent with the salary paid to the previous minister, assuming finances are available for it.

Like salary, the community should consider offering similar benefits to what were offered to the previous minister where practical. Some benefits to consider for the Interim Minister are as follows:

- Funding for the interim minister to return to his/her home base several times during the interim ministry period.
- Payment to the minister's retirement fund.
- Health insurance.
- Agreement on sick leave.

**Note:** For further information, see the sample contract toward the end of this document.

## **What Is Expected of the Board/Core Council and Congregation?**

1. The board/core council will negotiate an agreement with the interim minister (see the sample contract toward the end of this document) to be signed by both parties and approved by the Ecclesiastical Leader at United Centers for Spiritual Living. The contract will include salary, benefits, hours of work per week, and any other agreements between the parties for the Interim Ministry.
2. The board/core council will appoint a Transitional Advisory Committee to give direction during the interim period and support to the interim minister, with at least one, and not more than two, board members on that committee.
3. The congregation and board/core council will be expected to work together to complete agreed-upon developmental tasks and to establish goals for the ministry. The ER and Ecclesiastical Leader of UCSL can be of great support in this work.

4. Will participate in an evaluation of the interim ministry.
5. Interim minister services will continue until the community begins candidating and a permanent minister is selected, or with an agreed minimum of 60 days notice by either party, unless modified by mutual agreement. Ordinarily, the period of interim service will be between six and twelve months.
6. In no way support or encourage the interim minister to become a candidate for minister in the church being served. If the interim minister were to become a candidate, this would be an ethical breach by that minister.

*This section adapted from Unity manual on Transitional Ministry.*

### **What Is Expected of United Centers for Spiritual Living?**

1. Upon learning of the resignation of the minister, the ER will contact the board/core council president immediately.
2. The ER in conjunction with the Ecclesiastical Leader and GEMS will assist the board/core council in determining if an interim minister is appropriate and available, and provide support with the interim process.
3. Will assist in selecting interim minister candidates and make sure they have the necessary interim ministry training.
4. The Ecclesiastical Leader at UCSL will coordinate the training of Interim Ministers.
5. Will provide a continuing educational program for trained interim ministers.

*This section adapted from Unity manual on Transitional Ministry.*

## A Special Note on Candidating

One issue that always surfaces is should an Interim Minister be permitted to candidate for the church he/she is serving. Every policy reviewed does not permit interims to candidate. There are a number of reasons for this and here are the primary reasons given for not allowing interims to candidate:

- The role of the interim is compromised.
- There is an unfair advantage over other candidates.
- Subgroups in the church may “woo” an interim and the interim may put popularity ahead of objectivity in proceeding with interim tasks.
- The interim program loses support of field ministers who see that interims use the program to become placed as full-time ministers.

Therefore interim ministers are not permitted to candidate for the center they are serving in an interim capacity.

## Ultimate Goal/Vision

The ultimate goal, which could take several years, is to have a fully funded interim ministry program with several full-time certified interim ministers in each ER region. “Interim Minister” may eventually become a professional designation with its own set of standards and protocols. This will create the opportunity for a rewarding career path for ministers called to this work, and foster the greater health of centers throughout our movement as we manage our transitions more effectively and use them as the healing and growth opportunities that they are.

## Timeline for Evolving Interim Ministry Program

Date	Milestone
Jan 2009	ER agreement on interim ministry plan (and Core Council review)
Feb 2009	Orientation on interim ministry program at Annual Gathering
Feb-Jun 2009	Development of IM training program
Apr/May 2009	Request for funding for IM program in 2009-10 budgeting process

Aug 2009	First introduction of IM Program at Asilomar
Sep 2009	Monthly follow-up training via teleconference begins
Feb 2010	Follow-up IM training in person
Aug 2010	Follow-up IM training in person

## Application for Interim Ministry

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

1. List the churches you have served, including dates.

2. Describe three of your successes/accomplishments in ministry.

1.

2.

3.

3. Describe one of your greatest challenges in ministry.

4. Describe your approach to entering a spiritual community where you would be providing spiritual leadership.

5. How does Interim Ministry fit in with your plans, values, needs: Can you see yourself as a career Interim Minister?

6. How would you plan to fund your living expenses when you may not be receiving a salary from a church (e.g., in between Interim Ministry assignments)?

7. How do you take care of your personal needs, how do you nurture yourself?

8. Describe how you balance the roles of facilitation, guidance, and leadership when working with a board/core council or committee (e.g., when do you lead and when do you facilitate the process or provide guidance?).

9. Describe how you've handled grief and loss in your own life.

10. Describe your philosophy in addressing performance issues with an employee of a spiritual community.

11. Describe how you've handled a conflict between two or more groups within a spiritual community you've served.

12. Do you understand that you are not to become a candidate for minister in the church you serve as Interim Minister, nor in any way support or encourage anyone to seek this on your behalf?

13. Please list the name of two board/core council members who are the most familiar with your work. May we call them?

## Contract between an Interim Minister and Spiritual Community

The following is a working document that can be adapted and modified as appropriate for the particular community and Interim Minister. The board/core council and Interim Minister should review each item thoroughly and change as appropriate before being signed by each party.

The Official Board/Core Council of the \_\_\_\_\_  
voted on \_\_\_\_\_ to call \_\_\_\_\_  
as Interim Minister. The following is a statement of basic agreements related to  
the call and terms of ministry.

1. The Interim Ministry will be governed by the understandings contained in the Covenant and Principles. (See summary at the end of this document.)
  
2. The beginning date of the Interim Ministry is  
.
  
3. The Interim Minister will normally work \_\_\_\_\_ hours per  
week.
  
4. Beginning compensation will be as follows (all dollar figures are annual):
  - a. Salary: \_\_\_\_\_
  
  - b. Housing allowance: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** It is recommended that salary be equivalent to that of the preceding minister, when possible, since the Interim Minister is a trained specialist.

5. **Benefits**

- a. Retirement Fund (normally paid by the community at the rate of 15% salary.

Amount per month \$

- b. Health insurance

Details:

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- c. Additional benefits:

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6. **Reimbursement for expenses incurred in service to the church.**

a. Travel Expenses:

To be paid on a mileage basis at the rate of

b. Other professional expenses:  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. **Vacation**

To be one week for each three months service, to be taken any time after three months service, and/or as accumulated to the end of the Interim Ministry.

8. **Holidays**

The Interim Minister is granted the following holidays:

New Year's Day	Thanksgiving Day
Memorial Day	Christmas
Independence Day	Good Friday
Labor Day	

9. **Sick Leave**

One day of sick leave will be accumulated for each month of service.

10. **Continuing Education**

One-half day of continuing education leave may be accumulated for each month of service. This time may be used by the minister for general growth in skill or knowledge relating to the ministry.

11. Limited moving expenses will be paid by the spiritual community.

Approximate amount \$

12. Other items of concern may be negotiated between the Board and the Interim Minister.

13. The Interim Ministry will normally be for six to twelve months but can be modified by mutual agreement. A termination of sixty days notice by either party is required unless modified by mutual agreement. (Prior to termination by either party, the Board/Core Council and the Interim Minister should consult with the Ecclesiastical Representative.

14. This contract between the Interim Minister and the Board/Core Council is subject to revision at the request of the Interim Minister or the Board/Core Council.

15. It is further agreed that the Interim Minister or his/her minister spouse, shall not be considered as a candidate for the permanent position. Were this to occur, the Interim Minister would have committed an ethical breach.

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President, Board of Trustees/Core Council

Date

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Interim Minister

Date

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Received & Approved by United Centers for Spiritual Living

Date

Ecclesiastical Leader

## Covenant and Guiding Principles

### THE INTERIM MINISTER

(Instructions: Write in "Yes", if agreed, "No" if not agreed to.)

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ I will not be considered nor encourage anyone to consider me a candidate for the position at this church.
  
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ I will normally serve as Interim Minister for approximately 6 months, with a minimum 60 day termination notice by either party.
  
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ I will participate in continuing training/support meetings.
  
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ I will provide normal ecclesiastical and administrative leadership.
  
- e. \_\_\_\_\_ I will provide special leadership for helping the congregation deal with grief, conflict matters and agreed-on-congregational tasks.
  
- f. \_\_\_\_\_ I will participate in an evaluation of the interim ministry.
  
- g. \_\_\_\_\_ I will write a report on this interim assignment at the end of my contract.

I agree to the above: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Adapted from Unity manual on transitional ministry.*

## THE CONGREGATION AND BOARD/CORE COUNCIL

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ will meet the salary and benefits agreed to.
  
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ will appoint an interim advisory committee to help give direction during the interim period.
  
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ will work with the Interim Minister to complete essential congregational tasks, and to establish goals for this ministry.
  
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ will begin the candidating process when the Interim Advisory Committee, in consultation with the Interim Minister the board/core council, and the Ecclesiastical Representative, has together determined that the congregation is ready by virtue of having completed essential tasks.

*Adapted from Unity manual on transitional ministry.*

## Glossary of Terms

**Ecclesiastical Representative (ER):** These are regional field representatives that oversee all of the spiritual communities in their particular geographic region. Currently there are seven regions, with six being in the U.S. and Canada and one for the rest of the world.

**UCSL:** United Centers for Spiritual Living.

**ICSL:** International Centers for Spiritual Living.

**IM:** Interim Minister.

**GEMS:** Department of Growth, Expansion and Ministerial Support with United Centers for Spiritual Living. GEMS is responsible for practitioner and ministerial licensing, and all things related to practitioners and ministers after they are licensed.

**Ecclesiastical Leader:** This is a position at United Centers for Spiritual Living International Headquarters. The position was formerly known as the Ecclesiastical Core Coordinator (ECC). The Ecclesiastical Leader oversees and provides vision to all other ecclesiastical departments including Education, Holmes Institute School of Ministry, International Youth and Family Ministries, World Ministry of Prayer, Growth, Expansion and Ministerial Support, the Practitioner Core, and the International Core.