

Intentional Interim Ministry: Policy and Procedures for Designation

March 2022



Office of / Bureau de la
vocation

The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Intentional Interim Ministry: Policy and Procedures for Designation (March 2022)



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Gratitude: We are grateful for resources from the Interim Ministry Committee of the former Hamilton Conference, which contributed some materials to this resource.

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About This Resource

This resource is for ministry personnel who wish to be initially designated as an intentional interim minister or who wish to be approved for continuing designation as an intentional interim minister, and the Office of Vocation and regional councils who support them.

This resource expands the process for designation for those called to serve in interim ministry from what is outlined in *The Manual*. This resource contains policy for the designation of intentional interim ministers.

This is one in a series to guide the church in the area of intentional interim ministry. The other resources in this series are as follows:

- Intentional Interim Ministry: Policy and Procedures for Designation
- Intentional Interim Ministry: Resource for Transition Teams
- Intentional Interim Ministry: Resource for Regional Council

Unlike the other resources in the series, this resource does not contain best practices, but is largely procedural policy on the designation of intentional interim ministers.

Designation of Intentional Interim Ministers

1. Board / Office of Vocation / Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation

- sets the denominational policy for intentional interim ministers and for interim ministry
- maintains a database of intentional interim ministers with their assignment history and current status
- considers applications and decides to designate, not to designate, or to remove the designation of intentional interim ministers for the United Church of Canada. These decisions cannot be appealed (*The Manual*, section J.10.3 d)).
- includes in their personnel file for each applicant who is interviewed for designation as an intentional interim minister copies of application forms and supporting documents, interview notes, evaluation reports, and any other relevant information.
- participates in the exit interviews of intentional interim ministers.

2. Regional Council

- educates themselves and communities of faith regarding interim ministry and interim ministry policy
- receives, reviews, and forwards the evaluation of an interim ministry from the transition team to the Office of Vocation (officeofvocation@united-church.ca)—may add comments regarding the circumstances of the interim ministry situation

- receives and forwards the evaluation of the intentional interim minister from the transition team to the Office of Vocation

A. Qualifications for Designation

1. General Personal and Professional Qualifications

- normally has a minimum of five years of experience in pastoral ministry in The United Church of Canada and is knowledgeable about the United Church's theology, policy, and procedures, especially for pastoral relations
- has the following professional and personal qualities:
 - well-developed skills in all areas of pastoral ministry
 - a healthy self-image and a high tolerance for stress and ambiguity
 - ability to cope with constant change on a personal and professional level
 - awareness of their own response to conflict and ability to help others work through it
 - a sense of humour and the ability to avoid getting caught up in others' anxiety
 - skill and experience with planning and intentionality in ministry
 - flexibility in leadership style

2. Professional Education, Knowledge, and Skills for Intentional Interim Ministers

Intentional interim ministers are required to take specialized training to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for their work. They are expected to refresh their training regularly through related reading and appropriate continuing education.

Education for interim ministry must include

- instruction in theory by qualified and experienced interim ministers
- practice supervised by peers and instructors
- evaluation by self, peers, and instructors

The Interim Ministry Network offers recognized training. Equivalent programs may also be accepted as appropriate at the discretion of the Office of Vocation.

Individuals seeking designation as intentional interim ministers are required to demonstrate knowledge in the following areas:

- theories of institutional change, particularly as applied to communities of faith
- intervention tools and strategies to lead the process of change
- biblical and theological understandings of change and transition
- the five Focus Points of interim ministry (heritage, leadership, mission, connections, future)*
- the five Process Tasks of interim ministry (join, analyze, focus, connect, exit)
- the roles and responsibilities of the intentional interim minister, as distinct from those of other types of ministry

* Developed by the Interim Ministry Network

- theories of family systems, conflict management, strategic planning, and adult education
- the ecclesiology, policies, and practices of The United Church of Canada, particularly as they pertain to interim ministry

They are also required to demonstrate skill in the following areas:

- analysis of a community of faith from different perspectives and with different frameworks
- use of appropriate tools throughout the interim process
- biblical and theological reflection with community of faith on history, heritage, mission, identity, purpose, and structure
- awareness of own leadership style preferences and ability to adapt as necessary
- ability to maintain a non-anxious presence in an anxious system
- critical reflection on one's own practice of ministry in the midst of transition

B. The Process of Designation

1. Individuals

Individuals interested in becoming an intentional interim minister

- consult intentional interim ministry documents on the United Church website
- consult with colleagues to discern whether they are personally qualified and suited for this ministry
- may request a discernment consultation with the Office of Vocation minister
- participate in necessary interim ministry training
- submit an application for initial designation to the Office of Vocation (officeofvocation@united-church.ca), including:
 - Proof of successful completion of an interim ministry training program;
 - A description of any other training in skills relevant to interim ministry;
 - A personal statement (200–300 words) giving a sense of call to interim ministry at this point in ministry; and
- invite their regional council pastoral relations minister or their Office of Vocation minister or a designated intentional interim minister colleague to outline their general suitability for intentional interim ministry at this time and ask them to send the reference directly to officeofvocation@united-church.ca
- if approved, are strongly advised to seek mentorship and care from an experienced Intentional Interim Minister during their first intentional interim ministry appointment

2. Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation

- reviews the application and checks the references
- may request additional information related to previous pastoral relationships
- appoints a team, which includes at least one experienced interim minister, to interview the applicant
 - see Appendices A1. and B for suggested interview process and questions
- receives from the interview team a written summary of the interview and a recommendation to designate or not to designate the applicant as an intentional interim minister. A decision may be postponed subject to the applicant taking further specified training to be completed by a named deadline.
- takes formal action on the recommendation of the interview team
- may make suggestions for personal or professional development
- provides written notice of its decision to the applicant, the applicant's regional council, and the Office of Vocation for the applicant's personnel file
- the decision cannot be appealed
- if the decision was not to recommend initial designation with conditions, the applicant may reapply in one year if the conditions have been met. Applicant will provide evidence of the steps they have taken to meet the conditions.

An initial designation is valid for five years. If within that time an individual does not have an interim ministry appointment, their designation expires automatically, without formal action

being required. In order to continue their designation, they will be required to take an interim ministry refresher course and to have a proposed interim ministry appointment.

C. The Process of Continuing Designation

Designation as an intentional interim minister must be confirmed after the first interim ministry appointment. Continuing designation is active for as long as the minister is in an interim ministry appointment, unless designation is withdrawn by the Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation. After five years without an interim ministry appointment, continuing designation expires automatically. After each interim ministry appointment, the evaluation from the transition team, with any additional assessment (signed by the minister to verify they have seen it) from the governing body and/or the regional council, is forwarded to the Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation (officeofvocation@united-church.ca) for review.

1. Individuals

Individuals requesting continuing designation

- complete an online application, including the goals of the most recent intentional interim ministry and a description of continuing education since the previous designation
- complete and submit Intentional Interim Minister's Self-Evaluation Tool (see Appendix C)

2. Regional Council

The Regional Council for the region in which the intentional interim minister is a member will

- conduct an exit interview and compile a summary
- give the applicant a copy, which may be edited by mutual agreement
- send a copy of the summary, signed by the Regional Council and the applicant, to the Office of Vocation
- receive, review, and forward the evaluation of the interim ministry from the transition team to the Office of Vocation
- receives and forwards the evaluation of the intentional interim minister from the transition team to the Office of Vocation

3. Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation

- reviews
 - the application for continuing designation and all attached documents
 - the transition team reports, the report of the intentional interim minister (if submitted) and the exit interview
- appoints a team, which includes at least one experienced interim minister to interview the applicant
 - see Appendix A2. for suggested interview process and questions

- receives from the interview team a written summary of the interview and a recommendation to continue or not to continue the designation of the applicant as an intentional interim minister
- takes formal action on the recommendation of the interview team
- provides written notice of its decision to the applicant, the applicant's region, and the Office of Vocation for the applicant's personnel file
- the decision cannot be appealed

D. Removal of Designation

Designation of an intentional interim minister may be removed through the Office of Vocation. A request for removal of designation may be made by a transition team, governing body, or regional council. The Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation may make a decision (with or without such a request) in response to an unsatisfactory evaluation or other action related to the standing of the ministry personnel. The minister must be notified in writing and may appeal to the Board of Vocation through normal United Church procedures.

Process

1. **Documents:** The Office of Vocation receives a request for the intentional interim minister's designation to be reviewed along with evaluations of the interim ministry and the intentional interim minister. If the request is received partway through an appointment, the transition team, the governing body, and the regional council will be asked for current evaluations of the interim ministry and the intentional interim minister.
2. **Notification:** The intentional interim minister must be informed of concerns and the possibility that designation may be removed.
3. **Interview:** To address the concerns that have been raised, the Office of Vocation arranges for an interview with the intentional interim minister, including their Office of Vocation Minister. Representation from the transition team, governing body, and/or regional council may be included as required to provide interpretative comments on the context. The intentional interim minister may bring an observer with whom to debrief following the interview.
4. Prior to the interview, the interview team will review the intentional interim minister's file. The interview would follow the process used for continuing designation with particular emphasis on the concerns raised, qualifications for designation (see page 5), and effectiveness as an intentional interim minister.
5. **Removal of designation:** If the concerns raised are not adequately addressed in the interview, and if the interview team discerns that the intentional interim minister lacks the skills or calling for continuing designation, the interview team may recommend removal of designation to the Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation. A copy of the recommendation will be sent to the intentional interim minister.
6. **Remedial work:** If the interview team recommends removal of designation and discerns that were some remedial work done, the intentional interim minister might then

reapply for designation. The goals for the remedial work must be communicated to the intentional interim minister in writing.

- 7. Appeal:** The decision of the Credentialing Committee may be appealed to the Board of Vocation through normal United Church procedures.

Appendix A

1. Interview of Applicant for Designation

The interview team consists of a minimum of three people appointed by the Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation; at least one must be an experienced interim minister. The Office of Vocation minister may observe and act as a resource.

Prior to the interview, the team will choose a chair and secretary, review the file, and prepare questions (see Appendix B).

At the beginning of the interview, the chair will explain the process and possible results.

The interview will explore

- personal and professional experiences that have brought the applicant to their interest in intentional interim ministry
- interim ministry training, other related courses and programs, and further skill development
- practical and biblical understanding of intentional interim ministry
- personal qualities and skills and personal and professional suitability
- any particular issues raised by the applicant's file

Time will be allotted for any questions or additional comments from the applicant.

Note: At any point in the interview, with the mutual agreement of the applicant and the interview team, the process may be adjourned for a definite or indefinite time without a decision having been reached.

The interview team may agree

- to recommend initial designation
- to recommend initial designation with conditions to be fulfilled prior to application for continuing designation. These conditions may include further training or other expectations
- not to recommend initial designation with conditions to be fulfilled prior to re-application
- not to recommend designation

The interview summary and recommendation are forwarded to the Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation for action. The summary concludes with the recommendation of the interview team to recommend initial designation, initial designation with specified conditions, or not to recommend designation.

A record of the interview and recommendation is kept in the applicant's personnel file in the Office of Vocation.

- If the decision is to recommend initial designation with conditions to be fulfilled prior to application for continuing designation, these conditions are to be put in writing and communicated to the applicant, with a copy included in the applicant's personnel file.
- If the decision is not to recommend initial designation with conditions to be fulfilled prior to re-application, these conditions are to be put in writing and communicated to the applicant, with a copy included in the applicant's personnel file.
- If the decision is not to recommend the applicant for designation, reasons for non-recommendation are to be communicated to the applicant and kept in the applicant's personnel file. This decision cannot be appealed.

2. Interview of Applicant for Continuing Designation

The process follows the one for initial designation. Review of the file will include application, evaluations from the transition team and from the governing body if submitted, self-evaluation from the intentional interim minister, notes from the exit interview, and any comments from the regional council.

The interview will focus on the present (or just completed) interim ministry. Here are some sample questions:

- What were the goals? Were they owned by the community of faith? How did you facilitate their work on them?
- What did you learn about the community of faith's systems and how did you work with them?
- Which of the focus points was the most significant during this interim and why?
- What was a key change that was made because of the interim ministry?
- If you knew then what you know now, what would you do differently?
- In what ways were your leadership style and skills useful?
- Where did you find your tool kit deficient? What is your plan for skill development?
- What sacred story would describe this interim?

Any particular issues raised by the applicant's file will also be addressed.

The interview team may agree

- to recommend continuing designation
- to not recommend continuing designation

Appendix B: Sample Questions for Designation Interview

Personal/Professional History

- What highlights of your faith journey and ministry experience have brought you to consider intentional interim ministry at this time?
- What doubts arose during your discernment for interim?
- Have you been in a community of faith that has had a transitional ministry? What did you learn about interim ministry from that experience?

Training

- In the interim ministry training process, what have you found most insightful or helpful?
- What further skill development would increase your effectiveness for interim ministry?

Understanding of Interim Ministry

- What do you consider to be the intentional interim minister's primary role during a community of faith's interim time?
- Sometimes when the interim minister arrives, they find no transition team or the wrong people appointed to it. How would you proceed?
- How would you help a resistant community of faith accept the interim process?
- How do you engage a community of faith in discernment conversation?
- What biblical story (or stories) would you consider using to guide a community of faith through the interim process? Why that story?

Personal Qualities and Skills

- In what interim ministry situations would you be most effective? Least? Why?
- How are you with conflict? Give examples of your typical reaction to conflict when
 - a) you observe it between others
 - b) you are involved
 - c) you are the target

Personal and Professional Suitability

- Some interim ministry situations can be stressful. What do you do to manage stress?
- How do you handle change and transition? Give examples from your life.
- How do you practice self-care?

Appendix C: Intentional Interim Minister's Self-Evaluation Tool

Please use this set of questions to help you reflect on your interim ministry appointment just completed. Please include your completed self-evaluation as part of your application for continuing designation or as part of your package of material submitted to the Office of Vocation (officeofvocation@united-church.ca) at the end of every intentional interim appointment.

Where did you find your greatest or deepest delight?

How were you challenged and how did you respond?

What resources (people, wider church, books, etc.) were helpful?

Which of the five Process Tasks (Join, Analyze, Focus, Connect, and Exit & Evaluate) was the most significant in this IM appointment?

What did you learn about systems/interim ministry/yourself?

How did you practice self-care?

How did this interim experience affect your spiritual life?

Appendix D: Exit Interview

At the end of an interim ministry appointment, an exit interview will be conducted by one or two representatives of the regional council and the Office of Vocation minister. It is helpful if one of the interviewers has interim ministry experience or training. The interview team can tailor the process to the circumstances, consulting the suggestions below.

Preparation

Everyone participating in the review, including the Office of Vocation minister, will review the evaluation from the transition team and, if separate, the intentional interim minister and determine the issues to be addressed. One interviewer will take notes.

Questions

The interview will concentrate on the progress of the goals of the interim time and the health, well-being, and future of the community of faith. You might include these questions and discussion points:

- What were the goals? How well did the community of faith achieve these goals? What were the roadblocks to achieving them? How did you facilitate their work on them? Did these goals change, and if so, why?
- What did you learn about the community of faith's systems and what information needs to be included in a report to the next ministry personnel?
- What, in your view, are the strengths of this community of faith?
- What do you see as the main goal or objective for this community of faith as it moves ahead to the next phase of its ministry?
- Ask for clarification or expansion on any issues raised by the file.

The interview also provides an opportunity to debrief with the intentional interim minister. You might ask these questions:

- How are you feeling at this point in the interim appointment? What were some of the high points and low points?
- What have you learned? What new skills have you developed? What gifts have you received in this appointment that you will carry into your next ministry position?
- What does the regional council and/or Office of Vocation need to be aware of in our work with transition teams and intentional interim ministers?
- Do you have any additional comments or questions?

Follow-up

The note-taker prepares a report summarizing the interview, which is circulated to all participants for editing and approval. Copies of the exit interview summary (except for the summary of the debrief portion of the interview) are shared with the regional council, the Office of Vocation minister, the intentional interim minister, the governing body, and incoming

ministry personnel. The Office of Vocation minister will ensure a copy is placed in the personnel records and reviewed by the Credentialing Committee of the Office of Vocation.