

Intentional Interim Ministry: Resource for Transition Teams

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Relations pastorales

The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Intentional Interim Ministry: Resource for Transition Teams (January 2019)



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About This Resource

This resource expands on the policy found under section I.1.10 in *The Manual*. It is specifically for transition teams in communities of faith of The United Church of Canada. It answers the question: What are our responsibilities, tasks, and relationships during a period of intentional interim ministry?

This resource contains policy and procedures that must be followed; and best practices that provide information, guidance, and advice on the recommended ways to live out mandatory policies and procedures.

Intentional Interim Ministry

Congratulations! Your community of faith is preparing to address changes within or around it through intentional interim ministry—an exciting journey of exploration and discovery.

Intentional interim ministry (often referred to simply as interim ministry) is an opportunity for a community of faith to take an intentional time out to seek spiritual and organizational renewal, to rediscover its identity, and to revitalize its mission. For the policy on interim ministry, see *The Manual, 2019*, Pastoral Relations section I.1.10.

You have agreed to serve on the transition team for your community of faith’s interim ministry period. The team will include four to six people from your community of faith, one or two representatives from the regional council, and the intentional interim minister, once chosen. With the guidance of the intentional interim minister, the transition team will lead your community of faith through a process of self-study, discernment, and visioning to rekindle its call to mission. The work will be interesting, challenging, and rewarding.

The intentional interim minister is trained to lead the interim ministry process. This document will give you an overview of the work.

Transition Team’s Responsibilities

- Liaise and collaborate with the governing body of the community of faith.
- Choose a transition team representative to be a member of the governing body for the duration of the interim ministry.
- Select the intentional interim minister and prepare for their arrival.
- Provide leadership and work collaboratively with the intentional interim minister.
- Review, clarify, and develop the initial goals set for the interim ministry by the governing body and/or the regional council.
- Communicate and consult regularly with the community of faith and its subgroups.
- Promote conversation, learning, understanding, and transition in the community of faith.
- Involve the community of faith in the tasks of claiming its identity and mission, clarifying its future, and renewing its connections to the wider church and community.
- Develop and implement plans that enable the community of faith to work on its goals.
- Regularly evaluate progress on the goals and be alert to emerging needs.
- Participate in the evaluation of the intentional interim minister and the interim ministry.
- Model responsible participation, healthy relationships, and faithful witness.

Pivotal Role of the Transition Team

- *To the governing body:* provide information, clarification, and recommendations
- *To the intentional interim minister:* give interpretation, insight, accompaniment, and support
- *To the community of faith:* offer leadership that challenges, reassures, encourages risk, and assists with making the necessary changes to move on in its ministry
- *After the interim:* members will be called on to give leadership in other roles so the new ways are integrated into the community of faith's ongoing work

The transition team itself functions as a mini-laboratory for the transitions the community of faith will undergo. It explores the culture and dynamics of the community of faith, with all of its strengths and struggles. As the team analyzes what holds the community of faith back from its potential, those very issues may become apparent in its own discussions.

By intentionally building a cooperative climate, the team learns to change old patterns and try new things. Then it can help the governing body, committees, and community of faith to do the same. The success of the team will lie in its ability to recognize issues that are impeding the community of faith's life, deal with them in its own functioning, and then lead the community of faith to recognize and address those patterns of behaviour and take appropriate actions to change them.

Transition Team's Tasks

(Once the intentional interim minister arrives, they are part of the team.)

A. Recruitment and Appointment

- Establish initial transition team structure with regional council representative(s).
- Name a team representative to the community of faith's governing body.
- Write a position description for the intentional interim minister.
- Recruit, interview, select, and recommend an intentional interim minister to the governing body and the regional council.
- Plan for the intentional interim minister's arrival.
- Educate the community of faith, especially its staff, about the incoming minister's responsibilities.
- Brief the intentional interim minister for quick entry into the community of faith.
- On arrival, welcome and introduce the intentional interim minister into the community of faith.
- With the regional council, plan and assist with a covenanting service.

B. Team Building

- Get to know one another and what each person brings to the team.
- Clarify values, purpose, and commitment.
- Lay a spiritual foundation for your work.
- Establish norms such as cooperation, decision-making procedures, and confidentiality.

C. Planning

- If your community of faith has a motto, list of values, or mission statement, consider its relationship to the work ahead.
- Refine the preliminary goals.
- Draft a preliminary long-term schedule, including a tentative date for starting the search process.
- Establish initial meeting frequency (perhaps twice a month for the first year).
- Establish relationships with other bodies in the community of faith, especially the governing body and the M&P Committee.

D. Relating to the Community of Faith

- Recognize and manage anxiety and resistance.
- Regularly communicate with the governing body and the community of faith to keep them informed and involved.

E. Community of Faith Gatherings

- Convey information and collect input.
- Analyze the system and respond appropriately.

F. Transition Tasks (Focus Points) and Goals

- Develop and implement plans for the community of faith to work on the goals.
- Work on the focus points for interim ministry with the community of faith.
- Be leaders in change.

G. Reviews

- Regularly take stock of how things are going and of the team's own well-being.
- Report progress on goals to the governing body and the community of faith.
- Complete a mid-term review for the regional council.

H. Evaluation and Reporting

- Review and evaluate the transition work.
- Conduct evaluations of the interim ministry and the intentional interim minister.
- Write and submit final reports to the regional council.
- Make recommendations to the governing body.

I. Disengagement and Closure

- Present a final report to the community of faith.
- With the M&P Committee, facilitate farewells to the intentional interim minister.
- Bring the transition team to a close; members will often take other leadership positions to assist in integrating changes.
- Celebrate new beginnings with the community of faith.

A. Recruitment and Appointment

The first major task for the transition team is to function as a search team to recruit an intentional interim minister. The process is as follows:

Write a Position Description for the Intentional Interim Minister

The position description should include

- responsibility to help the community of faith accomplish the initial interim goals
- the extent of other expected pastoral duties (The primary responsibility of the intentional interim minister is the work of transformation; the minister's involvement in the areas of Christian education, outreach, pastoral care, and so on will be limited.)
- qualifications and skills required of applicants
- the formal Terms of Appointment (Intentional interim ministers have specialized skills and training, so the minimum salary is 10 percent above the minimum for the applicable category. If they are not relocating for the appointment, additional compensation for commuting is normally paid [as a taxable benefit].)

There will be inevitable pressure to accept other duties, but the minister's time must be managed so that the work of transition has priority. The position description also provides criteria for the final evaluation of the intentional interim minister.

Recruit and Interview Potential Ministers

Your position description will be posted on the ChurchHub. You can also search there for eligible applicants. The Office of Vocation maintains a list of intentional interim ministers. Due to demand, the number of qualified ministers may be limited. Ministers who are not on the list may still be eligible if

- they have suitable skills, as determined by a suitability interview arranged through the Office of Vocation, and
- they agree to take accepted interim ministry training as a condition of appointment.

The regional council may also be able to assist with finding potential candidates.

The transition team selects and interviews suitable candidates on the basis of the interim goals.

Interim ministry often requires skills in conflict management, visioning, analysis, or grief care. If there are several applicants, their particular gifts will vary. The transition team's task is to discern the best fit for the needs of the community of faith during the interim ministry.

If the candidate does not have designation as an intentional interim minister, they are required to take Interim Ministry Network (or equivalent) training during the first year of the interim. The transition team ensures that the minister is given time for this. Upon completion, the minister requests an interview from the Office of Vocation.

Educate about the Intentional Interim Minister's Role and Responsibilities

The intentional interim minister does not have the same position description as a called or regularly appointed minister. The focus is transition work. Everyone, particularly the office administrator, other staff, key volunteers, and members of the governing body must be advised of and understand the limits of the intentional interim minister's responsibility and availability.

Making arrangements to cover pastoral duties not included in the intentional interim minister's position description is the responsibility of the Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee and the governing body. The M&P Committee needs to be prepared to respond to pressure from the community of faith for the minister to add other duties to their workload.

Volunteers can be recruited to assume some responsibilities such as pastoral visiting, children and youth programming, and so on. It is helpful to identify other ministers who are available for critical pastoral needs, especially if the intentional interim minister is commuting from a distance, and while they are settling in and getting oriented.

Welcome and Brief the Intentional Interim Minister

The intentional interim minister needs to be thoroughly briefed for a quick entry. They will need the order of worship, events calendar, recent minutes of the governing body and annual general meeting, statements of church policy, constitution and bylaws, and any other relevant documents. While the M&P Committee may help the new minister physically settle in, the transition team facilitates introductions to staff, the executive of the governing body, lay leaders, and other key people.

Participate in an Act of Covenant

The entry of the intentional interim minister into the community of faith's life is formalized in an Act of Covenant. The covenanting service is conducted by the regional council. The transition team assists with arranging and leading the service and is usually included in the covenanting.

Prepare for the Transition Team Work

As the intentional interim minister is settling in, the transition team considers how well it is equipped for the work ahead. It may be that some of the members, for a variety of reasons, do not wish to continue. It is also possible that the team needs to add people with other skills or perspectives. The governing body must be involved if any changes in membership occur, and it will inform the community of faith.

When all parties are in place—that is, the intentional interim minister, the regional council representative(s), and all the community of faith's members—on the transition team, the real work of the interim ministry begins. The first step is establishing cooperative relationships within the team itself, with the governing body, and with other groups within the community of faith.

B. Team Building

Intentional interim ministers are trained to help communities of faith take risks to transform themselves. These ministers know about change and transition processes. They know the ways a community of faith can get stuck, and bring tools to assist the community with self-study. They also understand how individuals may react to the prospect of change, and they can help people cope by offering spiritual guidance and pastoral care. Intentional interim ministers anchor the transition process in the great biblical stories, so the community of faith knows that it is not alone in the disorientation that comes with change.

Members of the team from the community of faith also bring special knowledge to the work of transition. They know the rhythms of the community of faith's life—its customs, rituals, and practices—as the community moves through the seasons of the church year. They have stories from the past that explain certain things in the present, and they know about sensitivities that are bound to elicit reaction. They can help the minister be aware of seemingly insignificant issues by explaining the political realities of the community of faith.

The regional council representative(s) bring an outside perspective, a sense of the relationship between the community of faith and the wider church, and a knowledge of church policy to the work.

As all the members of the team interact, they learn from one another, see from one another's perspectives, collaborate, and come to know the community of faith better.

Clarifying Team Values and Mission

Each member of the team learns about the interim work ahead and the skills they each bring to it; they will need to commit the necessary time and energy. To do this well, the team members first need to establish principles and values for their work together. They must feel that they can speak freely and honestly, and bring all points of view to bear on important issues, creating the climate that is essential for the discernment and decision making that lie ahead. They will play a pivotal role in the community of faith's next stages.

An effective transition team is characterized by such qualities as

- a shared concern for the health of the community of faith
- general agreement on what will constitute a “good and sufficient” outcome
- agreement on decision-making processes and a commitment to adhere to them
- dedication to regular spiritual reflection
- all-member participation and regular attendance
- ongoing attention to the group's working relationship through regular and honest review
- commitment to work through conflict both within the team and in the community of faith
- confidentiality

Preparatory work within the team must take place *before* the team begins to interact with the community of faith. It is essential for team members to have a shared understanding of one another's roles, a common vision of the work to be done, and a mutual commitment to support one another.

When a climate of trust is established and values are explicit and shared, members of the transition team develop a collective sense of what they expect for the interim work—that is, what they commit themselves to accomplish and in what manner.

Creating and Maintaining a Cooperative Team Climate

Most transition teams feel a positive urgency to get on with the interim tasks. First, though, the team must develop trust and support for one another. A retreat or more frequent meetings may help build the team more quickly, intentionally, and prayerfully.

Energy and commitment over the long haul require that team members be able to support one another, especially when the going gets tough. To maintain team wellness, each meeting must have time for spiritual and personal reflection. A climate of authentic discussion, cooperation, and action will foster productivity.

The question: How are we doing as a team? should be asked in regular reviews of the team's meetings, work, schedule, and communications. As members name their personal reactions, whatever is amiss can be settled.

When there is dissension or conflict in the transition team, it must be resolved or the work will be negatively impacted. It is helpful to have a protocol for handling conflict before the need arises. The transition team can be an example for the community of how effective committees function and how to manage and resolve differences.

As transition leaders, the members of the transition team must be clear and consistent about their collective purpose. When the team works as a cohesive and mutually supportive unit, the spiritual enlivening that results permeates the whole community of faith.

Decision Making

A community of faith may have unexamined expectations and habits that impact its decision-making ability. The way decisions are made is one of the key factors that cause a community of faith to become conflicted and to lose trust.

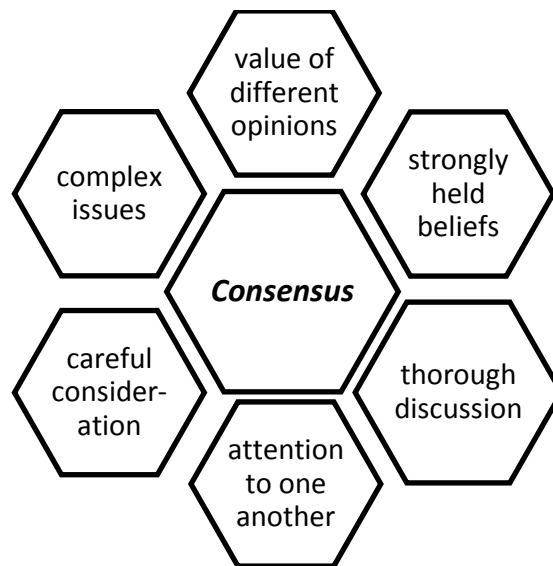
We know how decision making can go wrong:

- One side wins and the other loses.
- A group is perceived as the inner circle.
- There is a lack of consistency between one situation and another.
- Decisions are asked for and made without sufficient information.
- Decisions are made without involving the affected parties.
- There is a lack of follow-through and monitoring.

- Decisions are reversed when someone gets upset.
- Numerous other causes.

In order for the transition team to nudge the community of faith out of ineffective habits and into solid decision making, it first has to be able to do so in its own functioning. Ask, “To what extent do we invite and consider one another’s points of view, and work out our differences, before we make a decision? To what extent do we honour one another and listen for God’s call?”

Transition teams usually make decisions by consensus.



The decision may not be everyone’s first choice but is one they can accept. The transition team’s decisions must be properly recorded in meeting minutes.

Confidentiality and Transparency

For the Transition Team to build a relationship of trust with the community of faith, three components are essential: privacy, confidentiality, and transparency.

- *Privacy* belongs to one individual only. Most people are aware of the importance of respecting the right to privacy, that is, of honouring an individual’s control over how and with whom personal information can be shared. This right is protected by Canadian law in the Personal Information and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). For the transition team, this means that if people’s names are used in documentation or public display, each person must first give permission.
- *Confidentiality* means ensuring that information gained in private discussion is not disclosed to others inappropriately or used out of context. To maintain trust and the integrity of a process, it can be necessary to withhold some information. Confidentiality is a required condition for participants of certain groups to ensure that what is said in the group stays in the group. This enables people to speak freely about private or

controversial issues without being held to account beyond the group and context where the words are spoken.

- *Transparency* means that methods and procedures are clear and open and can be questioned. It operates on the democratic principle that people have a right to know about the systems that affect their well-being. It means that people will know and have a say in how information is used, who sees it, and how it fits into the larger picture. It supports the principle of keeping a community of faith well informed about the transition work.

Secrecy, on the other hand, will impede trust. *Secrecy* is the opposite of transparency. It is the condition of withholding information for the purpose of control. It is a situation in which only a few initiates are privy to certain information and everyone else is excluded, whether or not the information could potentially affect them. When people suspect, rightly or wrongly, that a few “insiders” are making decisions for others, mistrust can take hold.

When people are anxious that something is going on that has the potential to upset or harm them, they may regard others with suspicion and confuse secrecy and confidentiality. Some matters that are discussed must be kept confidential within the team. Consequently, it is very important that the team communicates its intentions and processes clearly and conducts its work transparently.

Without breaching the confidentiality of its meetings and private conversations, the team can share its

- values and mission
- decision-making processes
- timelines
- reasons for doing things a certain way
- results of research or surveys

Since they will deal with sensitive and controversial issues, team members must each commit to confidentiality. This means that the chair, or another designated person, is the team’s single public voice. Unless agreed otherwise for certain purposes, other members must commit themselves to making only general and positive comments about the team and its work.

Team Building as Experiential Learning

The transition team will lead the way not only in the interim tasks but also in the experience of transition. How do we feel facing change, differences, challenge, and controversy?

uncomfortable	frightened	anxious	
discouraged	sad	worried	hopeful

Naming, sharing, and exploring these feelings helps the team understand what others will also be going through and what will help and hinder them through the transition process. It will also deepen trust of one another.

C. Planning

Redefine the Initial Interim Goals

The governing body, with the help of the regional council, will have set initial goals, naming issues that the community of faith must address during the interim ministry. The goals are probably stated in broad terms. The transition team must reshape these broad goals into specific, practical ones for a common understanding of the work ahead.

For example, an initial goal for the interim might be “to bring unity to the community of faith by resolving longstanding conflicts.” The transition team has to identify what conflicts exist and clarify the meaning of unity. Is it a question of theology, internal politics, or the use of the kitchen? Once the issue is defined more specifically, a suitable strategy and an appropriate amount of time can be assigned to deal with it.

To clarify the interim goals, the team might use questions such as these:

- What is this issue really about, and how does it show itself?
- Is there a primary place where this issue originates? How widespread is it?
- Whom does this issue affect, and how?
- Who must be included when seeking solutions?
- What will be different in the community of faith’s life if this goal is met?

As issues continue to emerge, the transition team needs to prioritize regularly. As one presenting problem is discussed, the team may find that similar patterns become apparent in other, seemingly unrelated situations, and that its focus must shift. At the same time, the team will not want to get diverted by every problem and detail.

One of the most important things the transition team must do is determine how it will know if its goals have been reached. What achievements will indicate satisfactory outcomes? “What do we intend to do?” is the initial question. The next is “What indicators will tell us how well we’ve done it?” The specific outcomes are the baseline for evaluating the interim ministry and will guide the community of faith into its future.

Remember:

- Change takes time, especially for institutions and where deep beliefs and values are held.
- The interim ministry will not resolve every issue that emerges.
- Notice unhelpful patterns and limiting, short-sighted behaviours, and replace them with healthier, more functional practices.
- A goal is to build adaptability into the fabric of the community of faith’s life.

Manage Time

A tentative timeline should be created as early as possible to guide how the interim work will unfold. The plan must fit into the regular life of the community of faith, and account for factors such as its rhythm (periods of low attendance, sacred seasons, holidays) and the amount of time the intentional interim minister must give to the usual pastoral responsibilities.

It may be helpful to work backward from the time required for the search process and the final evaluations.

Of course, unexpected issues will arise and need to be dealt with. However, having an overall view of the interim schedule will provide a reference for helping the team keep the work on target.

Set the Schedule for Meetings

Because the work is intense and time-limited, transition teams meet frequently. Adequate time must be given to team building and planning at the beginning of the interim. After that, some teams will meet every two weeks for most of two years; others might meet monthly with sub-committee or work group meetings in-between. It is best to schedule meetings season-by-season rather than meeting-by-meeting so that everyone can make them a priority.

A quorum for a meeting of the transition team must include the intentional interim minister, at least one regional council representative, and at least three of the community of faith members.

Establish Relationships

- *With the governing body:* A representative of the transition team, often the chair, and the intentional interim minister become part of the governing body and report regularly on the team's work. The governing body has a responsibility to learn about the transition process and to be involved in the interim work. Its support and participation help the community of faith trust what is happening. After the interim time, this commitment will help ensure that the transition initiatives take hold in the life of the community of faith.
- *With the Ministry and Personnel Committee:* With an intentional interim minister, the role of the M&P Committee is somewhat different than its role with a regularly called or appointed minister. The tasks and focus of the interim ministry are overseen and monitored by the transition team. The M&P Committee relates to the intentional interim minister for specific pastoral relations issues, including vacation and continuing education, and regarding relationships with other staff and volunteer leaders. In some interim situations, the committee may be called on to assist with managing conflict. However, the intentional interim minister does not have the same accountability to the M&P Committee that ministry personnel normally would have.

The M&P Committee first needs to understand that the position description of the intentional interim minister is different from that of a regularly called or appointed

minister. The committee can then provide support by clarifying the differences for the governing body and the community of faith.

With less direct responsibility for the minister, an interim ministry is often a time for the M&P Committee to evaluate and strengthen its own functioning and effectiveness for a healthy pastoral relationship in the future.

- *Within the community of faith:* The effectiveness of the transition team's work is proportional to its collaboration with key committees and other groups. The better these groups know and understand the interim strategy, the better they will be able to support the work of transition.

D. Relating to the Community of Faith

Transition Team as Facilitator and Teacher

For interim ministry to be transformational, the community of faith must accept the work as its own. If interim ministry was entered into reluctantly or is seen as imposed, the natural response is resistance, which the transition team will need to address. For the community of faith to choose well for its future, it will need to practise, experiment, and learn new skills and behaviours. While the transition team may be aware of problems, its principal role is not to fix them but rather to act as a catalyst, facilitator, and teacher.

Manage Anxiety

Some anxiety is required for a system to change. However, if there is too much anxiety, people will be reluctant to give up what is familiar. To make room for new initiatives, the transition team can support people in the community of faith to accept their losses and acknowledge their fears. It is not enough to offer reassurance and to explain the wisdom of change. It is of more help to create the kind of community where people know it is safe to express their hopes and fears and feel that they are not alone. Being deeply heard helps people develop the trust that makes it safe to try new things.

The Bible is full of stories of people moving through difficult times, taking risks, and finding new life and hope.

Recognize and Manage Resistance

Even the most sensitive handling of change will not prevent all opposition.

What might provoke such resistance?

- opening old wounds
- digging up and naming secrets
- uncovering hidden agendas
- surfacing unpopular issues from the past or in the present

What form might resistance take?

- Scapegoating: blaming someone or something in order to divert attention away from the real pain. This might be directed at the transition team or the intentional interim minister.
- Influential people may fade into the background for the duration of the interim period, then re-emerge and reassert themselves after it ends.
- A former minister or leader may use old alliances to undermine the credibility of the transition team (even without formal leadership positions, they may still wield considerable influence).

What should the transition team take note of?

- evidence of resistance
- those who do not participate in the interim discussions or meetings
- rumours and parking lot conversations
- subtle or not-so-subtle attempts to divide members of the transition team
- attempts to influence team members against the intentional interim minister

How can the transition team respond?

- Listen to and recognize the fears, concerns, angry words, and grief; seek to understand.
- Speak to the individuals personally and directly, and find out what they need.
- Develop strategies to defuse their opposition or neutralize their influence.
- If a former minister appears to be working against the team, call on the regional council.
- Always work in ways that are transparent, invitational, and energizing.
- Communicate frequently and clearly to the whole community of faith.

What does the transition team need to do for itself?

- Recognize that such work is difficult and may make team members anxious too.
- Openly discuss frustrations to keep trust in one another.
- Be centred spiritually, pause for prayer, and trust the Spirit with and among you.
- Offer one another care, encouragement, and words of hope.
- Deal with and clear resistance when it occurs to release energy for growth and renewal.
- Take time to keep the team healthy and have some fun together.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

For adults to learn, they need to be able to integrate new information with what they already know and with their past experience. That requires

- concrete examples
- hearing material more than once
- talking about it and asking questions
- figuring out how the change will benefit them

Children, teens, and young adults should also be included in discussions. A single youth representative on an adult committee is neither effective nor fair. Facilitated and age-appropriate discussions in peer groups can be one way to tap into the creativity, concerns, and ideas of young people. Using social media is another.

For those with long personal and family histories in the church, changing the way things are done may be especially difficult. Seniors may experience change as one more loss at a time when they most need stability and support. Resistance is one way these feelings of loss and attachment may be expressed. Good pastoral care with opportunities to grieve can help them be open to new possibilities.

E. Community of Faith Gatherings

Gathering and Communicating Information

The transition team should try to use a variety of methods to collect information.

- Surveys: require careful construction to get accurate information, and may not be returned.
- Large group meetings: participants need confidence to speak out in front of others.
- Small group meetings: require planned facilitation.

Planning Group Meetings

- Be clear about what the transition team wants participants to take away.
- Break your message into small bites, with intervals between for discussion.
- Give your message in language that people are comfortable with.
- Use a variety of methods: hearing, seeing, speaking, doing...
- Help participants relate your message to their own experience.
- Say what you have to say, explain it, and then say it again.
- Give people time to talk informally with each other.
- Encourage the expression of contrary opinions.
- Sum up what you have heard.
- Restate your message, integrating what you've heard.
- Summarize what the process has been, what has been agreed upon, and what doesn't fit.
- Describe what the follow-up and next steps will be.
- Ensure for the team that the discussion is properly documented so that the main themes of the discussion are retained.

Ask Useful Questions

Do	Don't	Example
Make sure people in the target group have direct knowledge of what is being asked.	Ask untargeted questions too widely.	Ask those who bring children about children's programming.
Construct questions that ask about personal experience.	Ask for general opinions or judgments. Ask for likes or dislikes.	In worship, describe the parts you find uplifting. What else would help you maintain your spiritual focus?

Document the Discussion

Make sure the information gained from a gathering or meeting is documented and given back as soon as possible to the group that produced it. The results of whatever dialogue has taken place are to be recorded, summarized, and made public so everyone knows they have been heard, their input is valued, and what has been said has been recorded accurately.

Identify the Real Issues

When the team reviews what the community of faith has said, it will probably discover that the issues fall into clusters, such as worship, declining membership, or decision making. The impulse may be to regard these as indicators of what to fix. However, consider these points:

- These problems require more than a technical fix. They require adaptive solutions, which take creativity, experimentation, and new learning. Here is a 10-minute introduction to the difference between technical and adaptive problems: [Ronald Heifetz on Adaptive Leadership](#) (YouTube.com; search “nature of adaptive leadership.”)
- What is visible on the surface may be symptoms of an underlying, deeper difficulty at heart.

So what is the transition team to do?

- Listen with curiosity, look for patterns, and dig beneath the obvious.
- Reflect, pray, and discern individually and as a group; have patience.
- Be open to being mistaken, and be open to hard and even painful truths.

You will make unexpected and surprising discoveries and experience the moving of the Spirit. From that, the transition team can plan ways to help the community of faith come to their own realizations and insights.

Choose What to Respond To

The transition team may discover blocks that are preventing change and be able to deal with them fairly directly. Others will require more time to dislodge, perhaps beyond the interim ministry, and include more people. The transition team’s focus is on facilitating transition so that the community of faith becomes accustomed to dealing with and resolving issues as they occur.

F. Transition Tasks (Focus Points) and Goals

Focus Points: The Work of the Community of Faith

Each community of faith sets unique goals for the interim ministry. There is also work that every transitional ministry has in common; the term used for this work is focus points: Heritage, Leadership, Mission, Connections, and Future. They were developed by the Center for Congregational Health and are foundational in the training offered by the Interim Ministry Network, the organization that trains most intentional interim ministers both in The United Church of Canada and internationally.

The focus points are not a linear progression. Each one will be revisited multiple times throughout the interim, with deepening understanding. The image of a spiral conveys this concept.

Heritage

Heritage means reviewing how the community of faith has been shaped and formed. Knowing its heritage helps the community of faith embrace the richness of what it has been, the challenges it has worked through, and the accomplishments it has achieved. Recalling and telling stories from the past honours both long-time members who bring the memories and newcomers who want to know more about these roots.

A gathering to hear the stories is often the first big gathering the transition team sponsors. Sometimes smaller groups meet in people's homes. Heritage recovery is a helpful way for the intentional interim minister and the team to learn about the community of faith. The mood can be fun and celebratory.

Leadership

Leadership means reviewing needs, organizational structure, and development of effective and new leadership.

What leadership is needed at this time?	During the interim ministry, some new leaders will emerge, and some experienced leaders may decide to commit to new directions.
What is not working?	The system may be predisposed to maintaining old patterns.
What organizational structure is needed?	The team will work to open up the system and encourage updating the administration.
What will be the response?	Changes may be welcomed when they make things run more smoothly. Where there are particular sensitivities, change will be slower and may extend beyond the interim time.
Where will new leaders come from?	Leaders will come from the pool of people who have become excited by the possibilities that have emerged. Offer them mentoring, opportunities, and thanks.

What might happen to the new initiatives after the interim time?	Systems naturally try to revert back to the way things were. Some of those opposed to the changes may attempt to reassert their leadership and undermine the interim work.
What will help the changes stick?	Ongoing reinforcement and support beyond the interim ministry will be required.
What does the transition team need to do?	One or two members should be directly involved with the profile and search processes so that their work is integrated into future plans.
After the interim ministry period, how can the transition team support the new minister?	Perhaps a team member might join the M&P Committee. The team's wisdom can assist the governing body with helping the new minister carry the transformation forward.

Mission

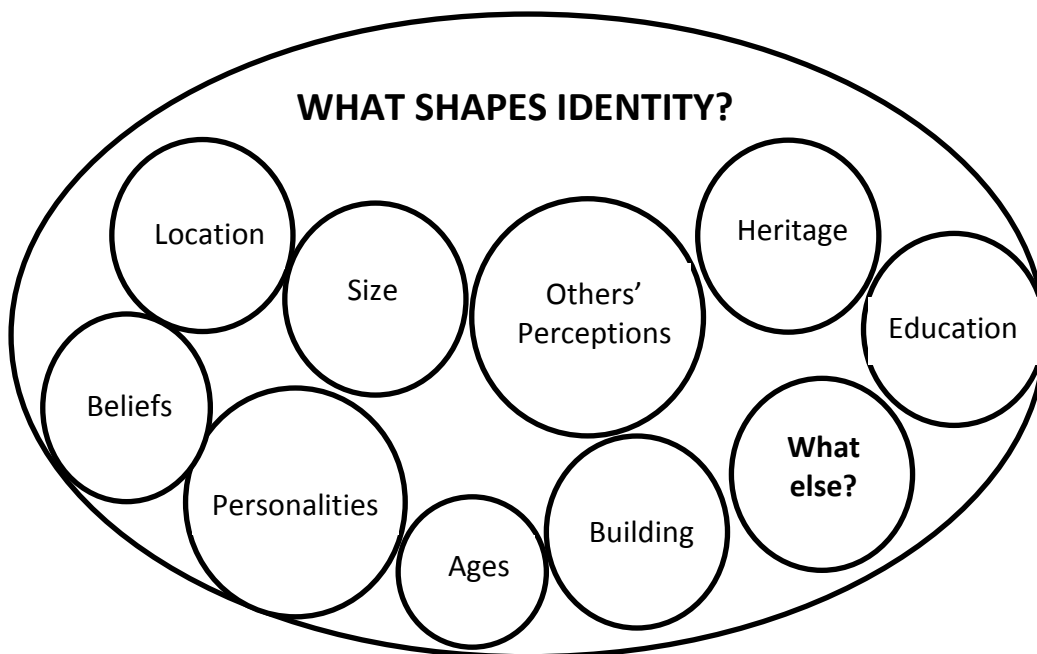
Mission involves defining or redefining values and purpose. This focus point has two components:

- clarifying the faith community's identity and core values
- recognizing the faith community's God-given purpose (raison d'être)

Identity

Each United Church has a unique character that has emerged from the complex external and historical factors that have shaped it.

Just like in a family, though, each person would describe the community of faith differently. Defining Who we are now? involves finding common ground among these many perceptions.



The work that has been done on heritage will have surfaced some characteristics. Now, the transition team explores ways to go deeper, discover intangibles, and name core values.

Purpose

An upside-down way of thinking about purpose is to ask: What difference would it make if our community of faith wasn't here? Or more positively, How are we making a difference in our community in the lives of those who are part of it, and in the world?

Identity + Purpose = Mission

Knowing its identity and purpose, the community of faith has a clearer self-understanding, better enabling it to respond to needs and challenges. Interim ministers often use three questions from Gil Rendle and Alice Mann's *Holy Conversations* to guide a community of faith in defining its mission:

1. Who are we?
2. Who is our neighbour?
3. What is God calling us to do and be?

At one time, a lot of energy was put into crafting a mission statement—which was often unwieldy and easily forgotten. Using a few words to name core values and purpose is usually more effective.

Connections

The connections focus point involves discovering all the relationships a community of faith builds outside itself. The interim period is a time to reconnect the community of faith with its larger community: the neighbourhood, service agencies, and schools; ecumenical partners; other United Churches, ministries, and the regional council; and the work of the United Church and its partners nationally and globally, including through Mission & Service.

If the community of faith has been going through difficulties, its relationship with the regional council may have become strained. The transition team connects to the regional council through its representative(s) on the transition team. The support they give the team can be highlighted so the whole community is aware of their positive impact.

Future

The future focus point involves developing a community of faith profile. The transformation that is initiated during interim ministry must be sustained into the ensuing ministry. Communities of faith have a tendency to revert to old habits at the conclusion of the interim period. Therefore it is vital that the principles and intentions of the interim ministry are well integrated into the life of the community by its key leaders, and that newly called ministers are well briefed and well advised as they take their places in the community of faith.

G. Reviews

Purpose of Reviews

Reviews are different from evaluations. An evaluation judges the effectiveness of a piece of work. At the end of the interim period, an evaluation is done of the interim ministry and of the intentional interim minister.

A review checks a work in progress to identify strengths and weaknesses so that adjustments can be made in order to meet a project's goals. Reviews of the interim work should happen regularly to help keep everyone on track.

Using Reviews

The transition team will benefit from assessing regularly how the work is going overall, how people feel about it, and what may be happening as a result. A review can also be done after a workshop or formal presentation. Simply ask, "Were our goals for the event met? What helped? What hindered? What would we do differently next time?" Ensure that everyone involved (or at least a representative sample) has the opportunity to respond to these questions. Insights gained in a review can help make subsequent activity more productive, reveal modifications needed to the original plans, or help with strategy for dealing with contentious issues.

A mid-term review halfway through the interim period is an opportunity to step back and assess formally how far along the community of faith has moved in meeting its goals and how well the work of the transition team is progressing.

The transition team's own functioning should be checked regularly too. Some questions to ask one another are the following:

- How are we doing as a team?
- How satisfied is each of us with the work we are doing?
- Are we on track in our relationship with the community of faith?
- What have we learned that we can use to make the next steps work better?
- Is our energy holding up, or should we step back to renew it?

Reviews, regularly used, can become a useful tool for checking that the team itself is functioning well and that the work it is leading is progressing as it should be. Or an issue may surface that the whole community of faith needs to address.

Timing for Community of Faith Profile and Search Process

About halfway through the interim ministry (early in the second year of a two-year interim), the transition team reviews whether or not the community of faith has clearly identified and claimed its mission. If it has, the transition team informs the governing body and the regional council that the community of faith profile, if needed, and the search process can be initiated. If

so, one or two members of the transition team will be part of the process to ensure continuity of knowledge and vision.

If the community of faith is not ready, the transition team has to resist pressure from those who are impatient to get on with the search for a new minister.

The transition team has to balance the time necessary for the search process to be completed with the readiness of the community of faith to proceed.

H. Evaluation and Reporting

Scope and Purpose of the Final Evaluations

A final evaluation of the transition work is to be completed at least 60 days before the end of the interim ministry. The regional council is sent a final evaluation of the interim ministry, including how effectively the community of faith's goals have been met and what continuity may be needed.

An evaluation of the effectiveness of the intentional interim minister is also completed and sent to the regional council for comments and for forwarding to the Office of Vocation.

The final evaluations are carried out by the transition team (including the intentional interim minister). They will include the governing body, and may engage the M&P Committee, staff, and the community of faith.

For the transition team and the community of faith, the evaluations are an opportunity to

- assess how much progress has been made on each of the goals
- affirm accomplishments and learnings
- note areas that need to be strengthened or completed
- plan for the future so changes that have been made will be retained

Participatory Evaluation Process

Participation in evaluating the interim ministry allows the community of faith to reflect on its progress toward the goals, to share personal and collective experiences, and to commit to continuing the work begun during the interim period. A well-designed evaluation will help the community of faith strengthen *connections*, acknowledge its *heritage*, affirm its *mission*, and be more aware of next stages for the *future* and the *leadership* it needs.

If the transition team chooses to conduct a participatory evaluation, it is helpful to consult the governing board regarding the process, questions, and issues to be considered. Giving people the questions ahead of time lets them consider how they want to respond and talk about their ideas with others.

Participatory evaluation is usually done in table discussions with a moderator taking notes. The transition team may also wish to use a general questionnaire to solicit responses from as many people as possible. (Note that this is not a scientific survey.)

Timing for Final Evaluations

Four Months before the End of the Interim

- Gather minutes, reports, and the intentional interim minister's reports, and review them.
- Remember the stories, and celebrate all that has been done.

- Review the goals that were set for the interim ministry. List the possible achievements for each goal, and collect both quantitative and qualitative data to show what has happened.
- Determine what additional feedback will be collected and how: meeting(s), focus groups, individual interviews (e.g., of key leaders), a questionnaire. Plan how results will be gathered and interpreted.
- If input into the work of the intentional interim minister is being invited beyond the transition team and the M&P Committee, determine what policies need to be in place to ensure that privacy and confidentiality are respected.
- Confer with the governing body on the evaluation process.
- Make recommendations to the governing body and the regional council for the evaluation process, the disengagement period, and the immediate post-interim period.

Three Months before the End of the Interim

- Conduct evaluation events and interviews, compile results, and draw conclusions.
- Share with participants (as able), the governing body, and staff. Allow opportunity for feedback.
- Share results and conclusions of the intentional interim minister's evaluation with them. Ask for their feedback.

Two Months before the End of the Interim

Final Report of the Interim Ministry

From the materials collected and the results of evaluation discussions (and questionnaires), write the final report. It should include responses to the following:

1. What were the reasons for having interim ministry, and how is the community of faith different now? What are the learnings?
2. What were the goals? What work was done on each? What were the main accomplishments? What remains incomplete, and why?
3. What new issues or challenges have emerged, and what are the plans for addressing them?
4. Does the community of faith have a clearer sense of mission and purpose? If so, how did this come about? If not, what got in the way?
5. How has interim ministry impacted the health and spiritual life of the community of faith?
6. Are there any recommendations for the future? Is there anything else you would like to share?

Please write the report so that those from the regional council and the Office of Vocation who are not familiar with your circumstances will be able to understand it. Convey as accurate a picture as possible. Share the final report with the governing body, staff, community of faith, and intentional interim minister. Send a copy to the regional council, which will then forward a copy to the Office of Vocation.

The intentional interim minister *may* also prepare a final report.

Evaluation of the Intentional Interim Minister

See *The Manual, 2019*, Pastoral Relations section I.1.10.6.

The evaluation of the intentional interim minister is focused on their work in leading the transition team and the community of faith to achieve the interim ministry goals. Input will be primarily from the transition team. Feedback from the governing body, staff, and the community of faith may be received during the evaluation of the interim ministry or may be sought.

1. How did the intentional interim minister assist the community of faith with its goals?
2. How would you, as a member of the transition team, describe the relationship between the community of faith and the intentional interim minister? Illustrate briefly with an example.
3. What strengths did the intentional interim minister bring to the work? What might have been done differently? What skills or knowledge do you recommend they develop further?
4. Any other comments pertinent to this minister's functioning as an intentional interim minister?

Once a report is drafted, the intentional interim minister and the rest of the transition team discuss whether it is balanced, thorough, and justified by the facts. Once they agree, the report is finalized. The Office of Vocation will use the report to make appropriate recommendations regarding the intentional interim minister.

The evaluation is sent to the regional council to forward to the Office of Vocation. Due to confidentiality, it is not shared with anyone else without the permission of the intentional interim minister. Sometimes it is agreed that the governing body, or its executive, and the M&P Committee will receive copies.

I. Disengagement and Closure

After the Reports Have Been Submitted

After submitting the reports, the transition team may feel able to complete additional work on goals and reinforce some of the learning in the community of faith. The responsibility for driving the mission (which the team has had during the interim time) is formally handed back to the governing body for it to carry forward with next steps. As part of the search process, any new ministry personnel should be briefed on the mission and plans that have emerged.

Bringing the Interim Ministry to a Close

By the last month of the interim ministry, the community of faith will experience the shift from the transition work of the interim ministry to the new mission. The intentional interim minister will be disengaging from the community of faith, vacating the office, and saying goodbye. It is time to draw a formal end to the interim ministry.

Closure is the occasion when the community of faith acknowledges the outcomes of the interim period and says farewell to the intentional interim minister. A celebration is in order: perhaps a special service, a community gathering, a potluck dinner, or some combination of formal and informal observances. In whatever way, it is important that people acknowledge what has been accomplished, that the leaders are publicly thanked, and that appreciation is expressed to the community of faith for its participation.

Disbanding the Transition Team

The transition team's work finishes as the community of faith says farewell to the intentional interim minister and shifts from the transition process into practising its faith in a renewed ministry. Members of the transition team will likely continue in leadership roles, formally or informally, on the governing body and on other key committees. Their continuing leadership will be valuable to ensuring that initiatives taken in the interim ministry period are put into practice.