

The Time Between: Interim Ministry Weeks One and Two

October 5-9, 2009

Monday 12:45 p.m. through Friday 12:00 p.m.

**Location: The Erdman Center - Princeton Theological Seminary's
Center of Continuing Education**

To: Week I registrants

From: Amy Fowler, Team Leader

Welcome to the regional education seminar for Interim Ministry sponsored by Princeton Theological Seminary and the Synod of the Northeast. We are delighted to offer Week I and Week II of the event this October and are pleased that you will be joining us for Week I.

With this memo you will find the following:

The basic schedule for both Weeks. You will note that the schedule is full. The week is planned not as a retreat, but as training/education for interim ministry.

In preparation for the week, please read:

- *Creating a Healthier Church* by Ronald W. Richardson (Fortress Press),
- *Our Iceberg is Melting* by John Kotter and Holger Rathgeber (St. Martin's Press),
- and the attached essays on the Developmental and Process Tasks.

You also may find the book *Temporary Shepherds* (Alban) helpful.

We look forward to seeing you on Monday, October 5. Registration will be held at Erdman Center, beginning at 12:45pm.

Please note: Erdman Center is a part of the seminary campus and meals are not served there. For the walk to meals, please bring a jacket and an umbrella.

Questions? For questions concerning the material in this packet, please email me at afowler@glpby.org. Questions regarding registrations and logistics should be addressed to coned@ptsem.edu.

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Monday, October 5	
12:45pm-1:30pm Registration	
1:30-2:45pm – Welcome Announcements, Introductions – Community Building -Opening Worship (Mark 6:30-32) Amy	
2:45pm – Break	
3:00 – 4:30 Leadership: Leading the Church in the 21st Century Amy & Bill 4:45 – Assignments – Conflict Style Inventory, Congregational Systems Inventory, etc. 5:00 – <i>Everyday Creativity</i>	3:00 – 3:30 Expectations Paul 3:45-5:30pm – Introduction to the ILE and Scripture/Preaching Processes Paul & Joan
5:30 – Dinner	
7:00 – Dr. Dennis Olson – Princeton Theological Seminary [Korean participants meet following Dr. Olson’s presentation]	
9:00 Evening Prayers – Amy (<i>liturgy in folder</i>)	
Tuesday, October 6	
7:30am Breakfast	
8:30am – Worship - Bill (Mark 6:33-41)	
9:15am–Noon - Systems, Systems Tools Joan & Bill	9:15- 10:45 – Tasks and Systems Paul & Amy 11:00-12:00 ILE #1 – Paul, Amy
12:00 – Lunch	
1:30-4:15pm - Tasks (process and developmental) and Tools (size and life cycle; culture; power dynamics) Joan (Bill)	1:30-2:30 – ILE #2 - Amy, Bill 2:45-4:30 – Scripture Encounter & Preaching #1 Paul, Amy 4:30-4:45 Break 4:45-5:30 – Conversation on Books and Systems Reflection – Paul, Bill
4:30 – 5:30 <i>Celebrate What’s Right With The World</i>	
5:30pm Dinner	
7:00 – 9:00 Self-Care in the Midst of Transition Amy, Joan [Korean participants meet]	
9:00 Evening Prayers Paul (<i>liturgy in folder</i>)	

Required Books for Week I: *Creating a Healthier Church* by Ronald W. Richardson (Fortress, 1996) and *Our Iceberg is Melting* by John Kotter and Holger Rathgeber (St. Martin’s Press, 2006)

Required Books for Week II: *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* by Ronald W. Richardson (Augsburg Fortress, 2005), *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times* by Peter L. Steinke (The Alban Institute, 2006) and one other – see list

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Wednesday, October 7	
7:30am – Breakfast	
8:30am – Worship - Joan (Mark 6:42-44)	
9:15 – 11:30 - Leading Change, Change Tools <i>Bill (Amy)</i>	9:15 – 10:15 – ILE #3 <i>Paul, Joan</i>
11:30 – Focus Your Vision	10:30-Noon – Conflict and Polarity Management <i>Amy</i>
12:00 – Lunch	
1:30–3:15 – Managing Conflict <i>Paul & Joan</i>	1:30 – 3:15 – Scripture Encounter & Preaching #2 – <i>Amy, Bill</i>
3:15-3:45 Break <i>faculty setting up room for cafe</i>	
3:45 - 5:15 – A World Café Conversation <i>Bill (Paul)</i> Afternoon Prayers (folder)	3:30 – 4:30 – ILE #4 – Amy, Joan Afternoon Prayers (folder)
5:30pm - Dinner and Evening Off – [Korean participants meet]	
Thursday, October 8	
7:30am – Breakfast	
8:30am – Worship - Korean Faculty and Participants (Mark 6:45-50)	
9:15 – For The Love Of It	9:15 – 10:15 ILE #5 – Paul, Bill
9:45-10:45 Discernment of Call <i>Joan (appreciative inquiry)</i>	10:30 – Reflection - Amy
11:00-noon Negotiating & Contracting <i>Joan</i>	11:00 – 12:00 Negotiating & Contracting <i>Paul</i>
12:00 Noon - Lunch and Faculty Meeting	
1:30-2:30 Board of Pensions	
2:45 –5:00 Competencies: Leadership and Worship <i>Amy, Paul</i>	2:45-4:30 Scripture Encounter & Preaching # 3 <i>Joan, Bill</i>
	4:30-5:30 ILE #6 - Joan, Bill
5:30pm - Dinner	
7:00 – 9:00 Spiritual Disciplines and Ethics and Boundaries <i>Amy & Joan</i> 9:00pm - Evening Prayers <i>Joan – liturgy in folder</i>	
Friday, October 9	
7:30am – Breakfast Celebration for Staff and Participants	
8:30 am Our Next Steps: Preparation for Week 2 <i>Joan & Bill</i>	8:30am— Peer Review & Vocational Issues <i>Amy</i>
10:30am - Closing Worship - Paul – Mark 6:51-52	

The Five Developmental Tasks of Intentional Interim Ministry

The time between the ending of one pastorate and the beginning of another is an important time in the life of a congregation. How a congregation uses this time shapes its growth, identity, and health for years. The interim period offers a chance for a congregation to talk about and clarify its hopes and questions about church life.

The rich potential of the interim time began to be recognized about 30 years ago. Primarily through the work of the Alban Institute, five Developmental Tasks of the Congregation were identified. These serve as the foundation for helping a congregation understand itself, its context, and its calling. The five tasks are:

1. Coming to Terms with History

It is important for congregations to know their history so that they can appreciate their heritage and at the same time be aware of the issues and concerns that need to be resolved in order to move freely into the future.

2. Discovering a New Identity

Identity is the task of understanding "who we are now in our present context and what it is we understand God is calling us to be." It is the task of developing the vision to which a congregation is being called.

3. Shifts of Power/Leadership Changes

In most congregations over a period of time the leadership begins to take on much of the style and values of the previous pastor. When that pastor leaves, there is often a time when persons who have been in leadership rethink their commitment and determine whether or not they want to continue in leadership positions. Other persons often find the interim time an opportunity to take leadership roles. This is an opportune time to empower those who are out of power and to welcome leadership gifts from all parts of the congregation.

4. Rethinking Denominational Linkages

Congregations often are not aware of the support and resources they receive from their middle judicatory and national denominational structures. That relationship is normally more visible while the structures of the church beyond the congregation are engaged in working with the congregation in moving through the interim period and seeking to find the right pastor to call. The transition time helps raise the awareness of a congregation to its denominational heritage, ministries and resources.

5. Commitment to New Leadership and to a New Future

When a congregation has developed a shared vision of its future and has sought to call a pastor to help lead it in moving into that future, there will probably be a new commitment both to that new leader and to that new future.

These are the five crucial developmental tasks of a congregation in search of a new pastor. If congregational members do these tasks thoroughly with wide participation, the chances for effective ministry with a new pastor are greatly enhanced.

The Process Tasks of the Interim Leader

David R. Sawyer, Ph.D.

The developmental tasks of a church or religious organization in transition have been well documented in the literature about interim ministry (Loren Mead. *Critical Moment of Ministry*, Alban, 1986). Even though these concepts have not been validated empirically, church leaders, from church board members to regional staffers have heard over the past decade about:

1. Coming to terms with history
2. Discovering a new identity
3. Managing shifts of leadership
4. Rethinking denominational linkages
5. Commitment to new leadership and a new future.

The tasks have been arranged as the centerpiece of programs designed to prepare women and men for the challenge of service as interim leaders, interim executives and interim consultants to churches and church organizations which are between leaders.

The term “developmental” was chosen as a metaphor for a church organization as a whole, as an individual personality, passing through stages of growth in a journey toward maturity. Echoes of developmental psychology were meant to resound in the readers’ ears. Each “task” was a response of the faith community to a transitional crisis in its life. Failure to resolve a task would result in a deficiency in the corporate life of the church. The developmental tasks belonged to the particular church or agency to resolve.

Occasionally these descriptions of evolving organizational personality have been mistaken as the tablet of law for the interim leader. Overzealous or misguided temporary leaders might take the five tasks as their personal objectives – to “work through the developmental tasks.”

In reality, the church organization will work through these tasks or not, and the best an interim leader or interim consultant can do is to coach, guide, or encourage the resolutions as they emerge. Any expectation that the interim leader achieve these tasks sounds suspiciously similar to pushing rope.

Unique and significant tasks remain for the interim leader, nevertheless. They are not the content of interim leadership, however, such as preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and leadership development in a particular congregation. Such content tasks are not much different for an interim pastor than for others pastors. The focus is rather on process of a human system, such as patterns of organization and behavior, relationships, communication, and decision-making. I have identified five process tasks which parallel the developmental tasks of the organization.

They are as follows:

1. Joining the system
2. Analyzing the organization as a system
3. Connecting with the denomination or larger church
4. Focusing and assuming responsibility
5. Exiting and evaluating

The term “system” is used here as a reminder that a church organization is a human system which behaves as though it were a person or organism with a life of its own, with its own internal interconnectedness, multiple contexts, structures and stories.

Joining the System

The metaphor for this task is borrowed from the work of systemic consultants to both organizations and families, in whose discipline connecting with the client system is the first and sine qua non task. Effective interim leaders find ways to make quick and significant connections with members of the organization. The manner of making contact creates an emotional fulcrum point at which the pastor's leadership and service have an impact. Emotional connections may be formed by adopting a few significant local customs. For example, if members refer to each other by first names or by formal titles, Mr., Mrs., Ms., or brother or sister, the interim could follow suit. If pastors are customarily present for the prayer breakfasts or quilting circles, find ways and time to attend early in one's ministry in those places. Local phrases and regional festivals are other ways to blend into the system. These accompany relational practices such as learning names, discovering family relationships, easing into roles of humor or trivial pursuits with members and particularly with leaders. One family therapist, Carl Whitaker, calls this task "soaking in." The interim leader does not hide his or her own uniqueness or preferences in these matters, but finds a way to be included in the togetherness bonds of the organization.

At the same time the interim attaches to the system emotionally, the interim is also maintaining a detachment. The interim always remembers that she or he is only temporary, and is present to intentionally fill a very specific role with that organization. A sense that the interim is simultaneously an insider and an outsider increases the power of the interim to be of service to the organization.

Without a point of emotional contact, a relationship cannot grow, and no leverage can be applied within the system. That is the reason this process task comes first on the list and first in priority for the interim.

Analyzing the System

After interim leaders have begun to join the system, they commence a more systematic reflection on the nature of the system. Some issues will be obvious, such as the degree of anxiety among the members, the level of dependence or independence in relationship with the former pastor and with the interim leader, and the strengths or weaknesses of the lay leadership. The interim also becomes aware of existence of conflict or its absence.

However, a systemic analysis accepts the obvious, surface pattern of the organization as a first layer of reality, under which lie further factors which define and govern the relationships in the church. This is analogous to pastoral counseling in which the "presenting problem" usually leads to more hidden and sometimes more difficult issues in the person's life.

Examples of the deeper levels of organizational reality might include:

1. Unresolved relationship issues with the most recent previous leader
2. Repeating patterns of relating with leaders over several previous generations of leadership
3. The extent to which the informal lines of authority and boundaries and rules are in line with the formal, constitutional patterns
4. The existence of secrets and the relative emotional power of those secrets

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5. Health or unhealth of relationship triangles.

Analysis begins early in one's ministry in a particular church, but it actually never stops. The result of the early analysis becomes a hypothesis, an experimental hunch about what is going on in the system. As the months pass, the interim leader will learn more information which will confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis, after which the hunches shift and grow into a stronger sense of the reality of the organization. The hypothesis forms the basis for choice of focus and responsibility in the fourth task.

Connecting with the Denomination

Just as the congregation or other church unit faces a crisis in transition that needs rethinking of the linkages with the larger church, so the interim leader serving in a connected denominational setting needs to make strong connections with the denominational structures and the staff and committees of the regional and national offices. Thinking systemically, the denomination is part of the context (or a super-system) for the particular church or judicatory. The denominational offices are often able to provide information regarding history and patterns of the church organization which are helpful in analysis. Furthermore, the committees or staff of the denominational bodies frequently hold the expectations or goals for a particular unit. In many denominations, the interim leader is appointed or recommended by the denominational officers, and serves as a representative of the judicatory.

Connecting with the denomination includes early and regular contact with the head of the next higher judicatory (executive, bishop, president), as well as progress reports to the appropriate board or committee at agreed upon intervals in the interim time. As difficulties arise, consultation with the judicatory's structures and personnel can also be helpful to maintain the detachment required for professional functioning.

Finally, connecting with the denomination is necessary to clarify the judicatory's expectation regarding the interim leader's relationship with the search process for new leadership.

Focusing and Assuming Responsibility

An assessment of the strengths and needs of the organizational system, including gathering information from the denominational connections, usually provides several different avenues of needs and concerns which the interim leader can appropriately address. The fourth task of that leader is to select the issues or activities which could be the emphasis of work during the interim time. The selection of an emphasis is based on several factors:

1. The leader's understanding of role and responsibility
2. The particular skills and experiences of the leader
3. The indications of relative openness in the system to one or more of the issues identified, including the agreement from other responsible leaders in the organization
4. The leader's understanding of God's call to her or him in this particular situation.

Edwin Friedman, author of *Generation to Generation*, who has introduced systems thinking to so many in the past few years, has been heard to tell interim pastors that they should "Join the system, and then do what is fun." That suggests that interim leaders have an opportunity to define their own goals and values and assume responsibility for leadership roles in the system.

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Within that responsibility, leaders need to follow their own hearts and focus on work that suits their unique personalities and experience – that’s “fun.”

In some settings the focus might be on healing from grief or reconciliation following conflict. In another situation, the need for clarifying roles and structures might cry out for leadership. A church organization might need strong, charismatic leading or it might need to have the leadership reins turned back over to the members of the system themselves in empowerment.

Alternatively, an interim may feel called to encourage either spiritual renewal or administrative effectiveness based on an assessment of strengths and needs.

In every situation, the focus of the interim leader needs to include the self-care and acceptance of limitations of responsibility. The spiritual growth, physical well-being and emotional health of the interim leader have a high priority in this task of focus and responsibility. Without them, the interim leader loses the necessary detachment and the essential energy for a focused leader.

Exiting and Evaluating

Frequently the best gift to a church organization for the interim period is an experience of a healthy farewell. Such an exit would include appropriate mutual expressions of joy and sadness, intentional person-to-person contacts with members who have had significant relationships with the interim leader, and a well-planned farewell ritual in the context of worship or membership assembly. Negotiations regarding contract termination are also important to be completed positively and with integrity.

Assisting the system to learn from the interim time is included in this task. Such learning is also mutual, with the exiting leader gleaning as much constructive information about her or his effectiveness as possible, and at the same time providing the church organization with an opportunity to reflect on its life and ministry.

Interim leaders do well to remember that the exiting process includes the clean break in relationships after the relationship has ended. While denominational ethics vary on this subject, ordinarily the interim is advised to end all pastoral and social relationships with the members of the church organization, in order to allow the emotional space for the new leader to join the system effectively.

Conclusion

Since interim leader training has been strong on process, and since an emphasis on process aids any leader to keep a more distant perspective on the organization by looking at deeper layers of experience and meaning, the five process tasks offer an agenda for the health and well being of both the interim leader and the church organization in transition. However, these tasks are uniquely those of the interim leader. To differentiate the leader’s tasks from those which belong to the organization, these five focus on the work of effective leadership and constructive ministry. They are better suited to personal prayer and journaling, or to discussion with the leader’s supporters beyond the church organization, then they are to conversation with the members of the system in transition.

On the other hand, they correspond with the developmental tasks in timing and sequence.

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Interim leaders have discovered that they begin leaving from the first day of entering an assignment. Focus itself has its moments of clarity and moments of confusion, at each examination of focus and responsibility, the analysis of the system needs to be re-examined, and the hypotheses updated or radically changed. Of course the task in the middle of the list also belongs at the beginning and the ending since an interim leader enters and exits a situation with the help of the denominational connections.

Such circularity serves as a reminder that process in human systems is also circular. Three elements interact: the work of the interim leader, the unfolding of the life of the church organization, and the loving providence of God. With that belief, the interim leader can confidently join a system and assess it, assume a limited area of focus, and prepare to leave, confident that no good work is lost in the realm of God.

**WE OFFER A FULL THIRTY (30) HOURS
OF EDUCATION FOR EACH WEEK OF TRAINING
IF YOU DESIRE TO RECEIVE
A STATEMENT OF COMPLETION
FOR THIS EVENT, YOU MUST
ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE
IN ALL SESSIONS
IN THEIR ENTIRETY
(30 CONTACT HOURS)**

(Adopted by the PC(USA) Interim Ministry Consortium - January, 2003)