



# GUIDING A CHURCH THROUGH TRANSITION

**A HANDBOOK FOR  
MINISTRY SEARCH TEAMS**

PREPARED BY MEMBERS OF THE PLACEMENT TASKFORCE  
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## THE PLACEMENT TASKFORCE: HERE TO SERVE YOU

The Placement Taskforce has as its primary function the specific responsibility of helping churches to find a new minister when a vacancy occurs as well as working with ministers in identifying fresh possibilities for ministry in other places. In both instances the Taskforce sees itself as a service group to ministers and churches.

At any given point of time, the Taskforce will be cooperating with anywhere between five to ten churches depending on the pastoral needs being experienced. In the past churches sought the assistance of such a Taskforce mainly for the purpose of appointing senior ministers (where there was a pastoral team) or solo ministers (where there was no team). In more recent times increasing numbers of churches are now requiring assistance in the appointment of additional team members. With this level of demand there is a commitment to the constant improvement of resources for churches together with ongoing changes to our modus operandi depending on the needs being communicated. The Placement Taskforce seeks to provide the highest level of service possible in what is certainly one of the most important decisions a church can ever make about its leadership.

The Taskforce undertakes a number of tasks with the Ministry Search Team in particular:

- Support is offered when an impending pastoral vacancy is notified.
- A Facilitator is appointed upon request to assist the church through the interim period and to give easily accessed assistance to the Ministry Search Team.
- On the basis of information provided by ministers about themselves, suggests lines of inquiry to teams as they ponder the best ways forward.
- Gives particular attention to the vital task of shaping up a pastoral profile as well as identifying the needs of both church and community.

In every respect it is an advisory role only. Each search team is left to make its own decisions and, of course, the church itself has the final responsibility for the issue of a call.

There is also a corresponding level of assistance offered to ministers seeking fresh opportunities for ministry. While no guarantees can be offered with respect to outcomes, every effort is made to alert churches to the availability of ministers who have indicated their desire for such a move where their gifts and experience are seen to be appropriate to the needs of a given congregation. The Placement Taskforce depends heavily on information provided by ministers about themselves and makes comprehensive (and confidential) use of information provided by ministers. Most ministers would be surprised by the high level of interest shown by Ministry Search Teams as they undertake their work. The co-operation of ministers in the provision of resumes is always eagerly sought.

If you are a member of a ministry search team, be aware of the energy and enthusiasm of the Placement Taskforce to help you seek the Lord's guidance as you ponder the best way forward for the filling of the pastoral vacancy in your community. If you are a minister feeling that the time may be right to be open to other possibilities in ministry, remember that the Taskforce is there to help you also. Hopefully, as often as is possible, the needs of both ministers and churches can be happily matched in order that the Kingdom may continue to be extended. These resources are offered to you warmly with the assurance of our thoughts and prayers.

## WHEN THE MINISTRY POSITION BECOMES VACANT

### A SUGGESTED PLAN OF ACTION

1. The Leaders of the church advise the Communities Team. (The Executive Director, or one of the other staff may want to meet with the leaders and/or the church members).
2. A member of the Church Leadership advises the Placement Taskforce that they want the Taskforce to assist with the pastoral search process.
3. The Placement Taskforce provides the Church Leadership with a copy of the Placement Taskforce "Handbook" and recommends a person to be their Facilitator.
4. The Church Leadership make contact with the suggested Facilitator about whether there is a viable match for the process. If unsuitable, another name is requested from Placement Taskforce until a Facilitator whose availability matches the church's is found.
5. The church appoints the Facilitator and the Ministry Search Team. The members of the Ministry Search Team are nominated by the church leadership.
6. The Ministry Search Team meets to:
  - 6.1 consider the Placement Taskforce Handbook & Manual;
  - 6.2 determine the procedure the Ministry Search Team will follow to carry out the task given them by the church, making use of Part 1 of the Manual "Who Are We?" and Part 2 "Who Are We Looking For?" prepared by the Taskforce;
  - 6.3 decide the format of a Congregational Meeting to be called to determine the church members' preference regarding the profile and role of their next minister. It is recommended that to use the material provided in the "Pastoral Profile Exercises" booklet to format these meetings. (It usually takes several meetings to complete these tasks.)
7. The Ministry Search Team prepares a "Minister Profile" and/or "Role Description" from the information gathered from:
  - 7.1 the Congregational Meeting
  - 7.2 the completed assignments contained in the Placement Taskforce Manual, parts 1 & 2, "Who Are We?" and "Pastoral Profile" from "Who Are We Looking For?".
8. The Ministry Search Team discusses and agrees on other relevant details:
  - age, experience and gender preference;
  - arrangements in place for present and future members of the Ministry Team and how their roles will compliment the role of the new minister;
  - available housing for the minister's family (manse), etc.

The Ministry Search Team completes the Placement Taskforce Questionnaire. (These matters usually take several meetings of the Ministry Search Team.)
9. The Ministry Search Team forwards the completed Church Profile and Minister Profile to the Placement Taskforce. The Placement Taskforce will, in turn, arrange for representatives of the Taskforce to meet the Ministry Search Team.

10. Church members are also asked to suggest names.
11. The Ministry Search Team and the Placement Taskforce or representatives of the Taskforce meet. The Placement Taskforce supplies names of possible ministers.
12. From the complete list of names the Ministry Search Team decides:
  - the minister to be interviewed;
  - the appropriate material to be sent to the minister to be interviewed;
  - the venue, interview format, questions to be asked and issues to be raised at the interview.
13. The Facilitator arranges the interview.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

(There is often a need for more than one interview).

14. After the interview(s) the Ministry Search Team meets to decide whether to recommend the name of the Minister to the Church members.
  - If the decision is a unanimous "yes", the minister is asked by the facilitator if he/she is willing to allow his/her name to be brought to the members.
  - If the Ministry Search Team cannot agree, or unanimously agree not to proceed with a call, the facilitator conveys their decision to the minister.
15. If the minister's response to the Ministry Search Team is negative, an interview with another minister is arranged.
 

If the minister's response to the Ministry Search Team is positive, a Statement of Understanding is prepared and agreed to by both minister and the Ministry Search Team.
16. The leadership is asked to call a Special Church Members' Meeting (or whatever the appropriate forum is in that church) to receive a report from the Ministry Search Team.
17. The name of the minister recommended by the Ministry Search Team is presented to the Church Members with the agreed Statement of Understanding.

## **THE CHURCH AGREES TO CALL THE MINISTER**

Two officers of the church are appointed to sign the Statement of Understanding on behalf of the church.

The leadership is instructed to make the following arrangements with the minister:

- The date and other details regarding the Induction Service;
- Housing and removal arrangements;
- Other relevant matters.

## GUIDING A CHURCH THROUGH TRANSITION

1. When the Placement Taskforce is made aware of a minister's intention to move on, the Taskforce may take the initiative to contact the church and offer assistance. Taskforce members are ready to meet with a church or its leaders at this point to explain procedures and offer support.
2. The Placement Taskforce will commence assisting when officially asked to do so.
3. The church elects a Facilitator and a Ministry Search Team.
4. The church should be encouraged to understand 'where they are at'. This will help them to clarify their needs in the selection of a new minister. If they are unsure of the direction the church wants to go, the Facilitator should be able to assist them to tap into the resources of the Communities Team. Note that there are plenty of resources available to help as church work through issues prior to commencing a 'call' process.
5. The Facilitator needs to be aware of the emotional tone of the church after the departure of a minister. In some cases there may be a need to help a church work through its grief at the loss of their minister. (The same goes for a facilitator working with a minister who may be considering a call to another church). Elizabeth Kubler-Ross identified five stages of grieving: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and finally acceptance. The length of time these stages last varies from person to person, but it seems best that the congregation as a whole should be at the stage of depression or acceptance before it is ready to call another minister. Those who will probably take the longest to recover from grief will be those who were especially close to the minister emotionally, those who have not necessarily appeared to be close but have deep feelings because of something or someone the minister symbolises in their lives (eg. a parent figure) or those who have often opposed the minister during the pastorate. (These people can sometimes have feelings of guilt.)
6. Pulpit supply or an Interim minister? This is the decision of the church. If the church chooses to continue without an interim, the leadership should have a workable contingency plan in the event of a crisis where a minister may be needed urgently. The advantages in having a suitable interim minister are:
  - 6.1 It takes the pressure off the need to find a minister really quickly.
  - 6.2 It gives continuity to the preaching ministry.
  - 6.3 It relieves the leadership from having to search to fill the pulpit week by week.
  - 6.4 It provides someone to fill the leadership gap, which can help stabilise the church.
  - 6.5 An interim minister can give support and encouragement to the total program of the church.
  - 6.6 An interim minister can have a sustained knowledge of the needs of the congregation.
  - 6.7 An "Intentional" interim minister can try to address areas that need healing in the church through sermons, individual contacts, and meeting with various groups.

- 6.8 An "Intentional" interim can be a 'spiritual bridge' between ministers. It has been suggested that three kinds of congregations always need a trained "Intentional" interim:
- (a) those who have just passed through exceptional crises or conflict with their previous minister
  - (b) congregations which have just concluded a long pastorate, and
  - (c) large congregations with multiple staff arrangements. (For further information re interim ministers see the separate section.)
7. The Facilitator and leadership should decide whether there are any issues concerning the pastorate that should be dealt with during the interim period.
8. Decide the nature and role of the Interim minister and then empower him/her to fulfil that role.
9. Divide and delegate pastoral responsibilities.
10. Help to promote a sense of optimism in the minister-less period. eg. good worship services, invite really good guest speakers, plan special events.
11. Talk about the future of associate ministers if the church is seeking a new senior minister. It is usually advisable to alert associate ministers to the fact that a new senior minister may change the climate of the pastoral team and it could be advisable to look to their own future ministry at the same time as the church is in transition.

## GUIDELINES FOR CHURCHES AND FACILITATORS OF CCVT

Whenever a vacancy occurs or is about to occur in the pastorate of any of the churches, the officers of the church should communicate with the Placement Taskforce through the Communities Team and, in consultation with the Taskforce, nominate a Facilitator for appointment by the church.

The Placement Taskforce suggests:

1. As the Facilitator has a confidential resource function to fulfil, he/she should preferably be a member of the CCVT Placement Taskforce, or failing this, a person trained and working with Placement Taskforce. The church Board can be assisted to appoint a Facilitator by contacting the Placement Taskforce.
2. It is highly desirable that the Facilitator is nominated by the church Board on the recommendation of the Placement Taskforce for appointment by a church meeting.
3. An immediate past minister or minister should not be appointed as Facilitator, or endeavour to exercise the functions of Facilitator. Appointment of interim ministers during a minister-less period should be made with the full knowledge and co-operation of the Facilitator. Clear terms and conditions for the interim minister should be drawn up.
4. It is helpful for the Facilitator to chair all Ministry Search Team, Board and church meetings when the minister's role is under discussion. Where there is no interim minister or experienced chairman of deacons, he/she may, by mutual arrangement, chair other church business meetings when the pastorate has become vacant. This provides for an impartial Chair, allowing other parties to fully engage the issues raised.
5. The Facilitator should operate as an impartial chairperson and should maintain contact with the church secretary and the Placement Taskforce by way of a monthly report made prior to the Placement Taskforce meeting concerning proposals. He/she should respect, and urge upon the Ministry Search Team a like respect for the confidential nature of considerations and negotiations particularly as these relate to any names of ministers considered suitable for the pastorate. If the Ministry Search Team is a group of people different from the diaconate, lines of communication and procedure to do with the call of a minister should be clearly understood. It is the role of the Facilitator to facilitate this.
6. It is helpful for the sake of harmony within the Ministry Search Team and in relations with the Facilitator to minimise discussions about the call of a new minister outside recognised pastoral search and/or church Board meetings.
7. It is essential that the Ministry Search Team should meet with potential nominees for the ministry role. Such an interview is customarily known as a "*conference without prejudice*" and should be conducted under the chairmanship of the Facilitator in a relaxed and informal atmosphere. The Facilitator is responsible for arranging such a meeting.
8. To preserve confidentiality, such conferences are best held on neutral ground away from the church premises and not concurrently with any other meeting, formal or informal, on those premises.
9. The "inviting church" would be responsible for all costs of travel and, if sufficient distance is involved, of suitable overnight accommodation, preferably at a motel.



10. Costs incurred by the Facilitator in the course of his/her duties should be borne by the church.
11. While it is to be clearly understood that a "call" is extended to a "minister" as distinct from a "minister and his/her spouse" there is considerable value in the participation on the part of the spouse both in visiting and viewing church, manse and district and in sharing in the *"conference without prejudice"*.
12. When the Ministry Search Team come to a decision concerning a minister, inquiry is made by the Facilitator after informing the Communities Team to ascertain the minister's willingness for his/her name to be presented to a church meeting with a view to a call being extended.
13. Unanimity in the Ministry Search Team is highly desirable, but it may be necessary in exceptional circumstances to proceed without this.
14. When the minister's permission is received, a Special Church Meeting is called under the terms of the church's constitution. In most cases this will be under the provisions of the Act of Incorporation that are outlined below.
15. At this meeting the Ministry Search Team presents its recommendation and the meeting decides whether a call should be extended. As a second motion, the terms and the conditions of the call should be presented to the church for acceptance. In the unlikely event of the recommendation being rejected by the meeting, the matter should be referred back to the church Board for further consideration. Under no circumstances should the name of more than one minister be discussed at a church meeting at any one time.
16. It is desirable that the Minutes of the recommendations and decisions by the church should be written up as the meeting proceeds and be confirmed and signed by the Chairperson before the meeting concludes.
17. The call is then extended through the Facilitator and with the knowledge of the Communities Team, on behalf of the church.
18. Care should be taken to announce the acceptance of the call at a mutually agreed time and date in order to coincide with the minister's public resignation from his/her present church or ministry.
19. After acceptance by a minister of a call to the pastorate, the Facilitator should continue to serve until the induction of the incoming minister. He/she could assist in planning for the Induction service and public welcome and may well be invited to share in some way in the induction of the new minister.
20. For the most effective service of a Facilitator there must be adequate co-operation by the church secretary (or Chair) who should maintain a close contact with the Facilitator in all arrangements and, in particular, should consult with the Facilitator before calling meetings of the Board or church at which it is desired the Facilitator should preside.
21. It is highly desirable that the Facilitator maintains a non-threatening interest in the progress of the church and its new minister in the first few months after the settlement and be ready to offer any assistance which falls within the Facilitator's role.

22. It is in the best interests of all concerned that regular reports be given to the Placement Taskforce while a Facilitator is working towards a pastoral settlement with a given church.
23. If it is thought necessary to keep a record of Ministry Search Team meetings, it is essential that the minutes remain absolutely confidential and are destroyed at the end of the process.

## PROVISIONS FOR A SPECIAL CHURCH MEETING

(as set out in your church rules)

- Two Sundays' notice is required to be given.
- Voting qualifications are:
  - Membership in the church for at least six?? months.
  - Age not less than 18 years.
  - Attendance at a communion service at least once during the preceding ??six months.
- The first business of the meeting to be the appointment of a Chairperson. (The church Board would usually nominate the Facilitator.)
- To be effective the motion must secure the support of at least **two thirds** of such members present and voting.

## THE CASE FOR AN INDEPENDENT FACILITATOR

Some of the difficulties encountered when a church has not used the services of an independent Facilitator:

- **Internal tension** has arisen when the church has tried to use the services of a person from within the congregation and there has resulted in a perceived or actual alignment of that person with a faction within the church.
- Unsatisfactory or **incomplete arrangements** made of the call's terms and conditions.
- Areas of vital concern to both church and minister are overlooked in the process and cause angst at some time after the settlement because of lack of clarity or even differences of opinion about issues that can be quite vital. This has led to **misunderstandings** and false assumptions made by the church and/or the minister.
- Processes associated with transition that have been poorly handled simply due to **lack of knowledge** and experience on the part of those involved in decision making.

Some reasons put forward by churches that decide against using the services of an independent Facilitator:

- *They will not understand the special situation we have at our church.*
- *We had a bad experience with a Facilitator last time.*
- *There is an unspoken lack of trust in anyone from CCVT.*
- *The church thinks it has all the resources it needs to "go it alone".*
- *We might get a Facilitator who will try to foist their theological position on us.*
- *Because this is a team appointment we don't need to seek the help of anyone from outside the church. The senior minister is able to act as Facilitator.*

**An independent Facilitator, who is trained, experienced and a good facilitator can help a church affect a good pastoral settlement.**

This is because an independent Facilitator:

- Brings impartiality.
- Knows the procedures and pitfalls to avoid in pastoral settlements.
- Is able to bring a different perspective from the "locals".
- Does the "leg work" for the church leadership in a period when with no minister there are already extra responsibilities on lay leadership.
- Has easy access to key people and can get discreet information more readily.
- Is already part of a group of experienced people in whom they can seek advice if a difficulty should occur, e.g. The Placement Taskforce, the Communities Team.
- Has a broad knowledge of churches and ministers.
- Is not emotionally involved in the life of the church as are the church leaders.
- Comes into the situation without prior knowledge of the dynamics of the church. If it proves necessary for the Facilitator to know more he/she is able to find out through the accepted channels.
- Gives support to the minister being interviewed as well as the church. It is difficult for a church to do this well when the minister being interviewed is the only "outsider" in the situation.

- Can often "read" an interview situation more objectively and identify areas that may be overlooked by the church leaders and the interviewed minister.
- Has access to information for the church and the prospective minister to help make the interview more meaningful.
- Is able to help lead through the post interview discussion with the church leaders and separately with the interviewed minister.

## HOW TO AVOID COMMON MISTAKES

1. Try to make sure that the Ministry Search Team is representative of the **whole church**. The two most overlooked groups appear to be women and older people.
2. Take care in the selection of the Ministry Search Team. People chosen for this group should have concern for the whole church, and be strong enough to not yield to pressure groups that may exist in the church. Their judgment should be respected by the whole congregation. They should be able to work as team members and be aware and available for the 'long haul' of ministry search should this be the case. Availability for meetings is a pre-requisite. They should be willing to serve. They should be able to keep confidences. They need to be willing to re-examine what they've always thought about their church's ministry, or how they've always done things. Given the special requirements it is necessary for recommendations for suitable members to go to the church for ratification by the church meeting rather than to have nominations from the floor of a church meeting.
3. The church should do a self-study before calling a minister. This will help to get a good 'fit' of minister, congregation and community and establish what kind of minister will challenge the people and the church to grow. It will help to establish whether present programs might need redirecting. A self study should include the whole congregation as this will help members to personalise the mission of their church.
4. Be sure not to make a choice of the next minister based on the reaction of the last one.
5. In seeking consensus, be careful to 'hear' everyone to know a consensus really exists.
6. Make sure that the prospective minister and the calling group have clear and realistic expectations of each other, i.e. check the 'shopping list' of both church and minister. A longer more thorough process of getting to know each other is preferable.
7. Ministry Search Teams need to have a clear charge of their role - what their duties are, what authority it has, whether it is the body to draw up terms and conditions. Their relationship and lines of communication with members and elders need to be agreed upon from the outset.
8. Don't be afraid to call on the 'experts' outside the local church. Within CCVT there are people who have developed expertise in the process. The Communities Team is there to help.
9. Approach the task in an organised and professional manner.
10. If the church is using the services of an interim minister, clarify with the church and the interim minister the parameters of the interim's role. It is best kept **completely separate** from the ministry search. However, it can be very helpful for the Facilitator and the Interim to work together for the benefit of the church.
11. Clarify the lines of communication with prospective ministers. Except in rare occasions, communication is by the Facilitator with the knowledge of the Director of Ministries.
12. The ability to think laterally and bravely will help the group to look beyond the known pool of possible ministers.
13. There is a need for the Ministry Search Team to be honest about congregational problems, firstly within the group and secondly with a prospective minister.

14. It is helpful to provide a church and community profile for prospective ministers.
15. Ministry Search Teams need to be prepared to do their homework on prospective ministers and not rely solely on hearsay.
16. Ministry Search Teams need to be well prepared for interviews, as do prospective ministers. This is usually the role of Facilitator to help both parties to be well prepared.
17. If a group is considering a minister from interstate or overseas, be sure to enlist the help of CCVT staff to help get the necessary information. The same applies with ministers who may be considered from other denominations.
18. Always consider the spouse and children in the call process. In interviews with prospective ministers it is recommended the spouse be invited to attend.
19. If Ministry Search Team members visit another church, be discreet.
20. Look at the full range of gifts and talents when considering a minister.
21. Don't hasten the process to suit a time frame if moving more slowly and carefully is going to achieve a happier, if later, result.
22. Don't panic if there is disappointment. This can sometimes lead to calling a minister on the rebound.
23. Keep the interim minister, (Facilitator's job) other staff and the congregation (church leadership's job) informed of progress without divulging confidences. It is suggested that the church be given a brief report after every Ministry Search Team meeting.
24. Allow grieving time after the former minister leaves for the congregation. This varies according to circumstances.
25. Use the interim to address needs and issues within the life of the church.
26. Expect that the Facilitator will have adequate communication with prospective ministers on behalf of the Ministry Search Team.
27. Let the Facilitator be the guide, but remember that Facilitators aren't perfect either. Any problems in this regard should be referred to the Communities Team.
28. Be sure that terms and conditions are clear and **all in writing**. Government legislation in recent days has highlighted the importance of this.
29. Many churches have among their leadership very able people who could act as Facilitator. However, experience has shown that an independent Facilitator can often steer a church through the process better than someone "in house". Placement Taskforce have a pool of experienced Facilitators who will assist.
30. When appointing a Ministry Search Team in a church that may end up interviewing someone from within the church, be sure not to have Ministry Search Team members who are closely associated with prospective interviewees, e.g. spouse.

## INTERIM PASTORS

### DEFINITION

An interim minister is one who is called for a specific time and usually for a specific purpose while the church is waiting to appoint a permanent minister. An interim minister may or may not be an ordained minister. He/she is expected to work under the supervision of the leadership of the church, in conjunction with the Facilitator. It is not expected that the interim minister will take initiatives pertaining to the goals and ministry of the church without the direct invitation of the church leadership.

### ROLE

The role of the interim minister will vary according to the specific needs of the church. The church leadership in conjunction with the Facilitator will usually identify these needs for the interim period. The role may vary from, for example, preaching once or twice on a Sunday to taking total responsibility for all aspects of the life of the church on a full time basis. Uncertainty about the role of the interim may lead to misunderstandings that impinge on longer-term church stability and effectiveness. Therefore, these responsibilities should be set out on paper, along with financial and other arrangements, and be fully understood and approved by all parties. The approval of the church through the designated governance meeting should be sought before an interim minister commences.

### PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

1. The CofC Placement Taskforce is aware of the availability of ministers for interim ministries and it is helpful to seek their assistance. (There can be pitfalls in using a willing person who offers their services as an interim. Check with the Placement Taskforce and/or the Communities Team.)
2. Sometimes there will be a person from within the congregation who will seem to be a suitable interim minister. **One word of warning:** It is usually difficult for the incoming minister to feel absolute freedom in their new role if a former minister (even an interim) is in the congregation. Such suitable people would be better serving as an interim in another church and then returning to their own congregation.
3. An interim minister can be called on to perform a variety of functions during his/her ministry. Tasks can vary from chairing elders' meetings, helping the church treasurer to work out the books, to visitation, conducting funerals, etc. An interim minister will usually be appointed according to the particular needs of the church in the short term and this is matched with the particular gifts for ministry the interim minister may exercise.
4. It is often found to be helpful to make interim appointments on a short-term basis, say, three months. The term can be reviewed and renewed as necessary. This gives flexibility to both the church and the interim minister in the event of changing circumstances of either party.
5. Interim ministers are never expected to attain the criteria that the church may require for the appointment of a permanent minister.

6. Some interim ministers are really anxious to obtain a full-time ministry in the church and will do interim work while they are waiting. In such cases, it is most important to **make it very clear** that the ministry being offered is purely an interim one with no expectation that it may easily become a permanent call.
7. If it happens that the interim minister is be considered by the church as a possibility for the permanent minister, he/she should be treated in exactly the same way as any other minister being considered for the call. One helpful process is for the interim minister to stand down for at least a month while the Ministry Search Team considers him/her and all other possible candidates for the position. The whole procedure of an interview without prejudice etc will take place prior to appointment. This allows the (previous) interim minister to be considered and called on the same basis as anyone else, rather than by assuming the position by default (which can be unfair to both the candidate and the church). Being the interim minister does not in any way mean that they may be the most likely permanent minister. In fact, rarely is an interim even considered for the permanent position.
8. In the event of an interim minister causing any kind of difficulty in the progress of the settlement of a permanent minister, it would be appropriate for the church leadership to address the matter and seek help from the CofC through the Facilitator.

### **CONCLUDING THE INTERIM**

Some interim ministries can prove to be vital to the long-term health and spirit of the church. The CofC is grateful that there are ministers who find that being an interim minister is both fulfilling and strategic. Interim ministries may be for as long as 12 months or more, or just for two or three months, according to the specific requirements. However, it is worth noting that the longer a particular interim ministry is in place, the more the congregation gets to know that person. Perhaps, without understanding the whole situation (as it would be assumed the leadership and Ministry Search Team would), there may be a push from the congregation to appoint the person permanently. In this situation, the Ministry Search Team needs to seek God's guidance once again, in consultation with the Facilitator and Placement Taskforce.



## **INTENTIONAL INTERIM MINISTRY**

Conventional wisdom is that the period between ministers is a “down time” for the church. Activities slow down because the minister is not around to initiate new programs or maintain continuing ministries at the normal levels. Offerings and attendance are down, because everything else is down. Perhaps the interim time is an excuse to take a vacation from Church.

A new “unconventional” wisdom has emerged. The period between ministers is seen as an opportunity. Such churches decide to use the interim time to improve their health. The churches that make that choice need a skilled interim minister to lead them. Intentional Interim Ministry is a process that has been developed in USA and adapted to Australian conditions. There are a number of Australian ministers who are qualified. They have conducted Intentional Interim ministries in all states. The process has been found to be most useful in helping the Church to creatively work through its journey and begin a new phase of ministry. It is particularly appropriate where there have been changes in the church or community, after an unhappy departure of the previous minister, or even a lengthy pastorate.

Communities Team are collaborating with other denominations in the training and sharing of a pool of such men and women.

## **THE STAGES OF INTENTIONAL INTERIM MINISTRY**

### **THE ENDING**

Three attitudes are present in the congregation when a minister leaves. The first is love. Those who feel close to the minister are devastated that he/she is leaving. They are in grief and may have the feeling that no minister can ever be as good as the departing one. These people have a low energy level and they feel threatened by the pastoral change.

The second attitude is found among those who believed that it was time for the minister to move on. They are rejoicing and this is a source of energy for them. They are ready to serve the church and move it forward. They don't understand the feelings of grief that others may be expressing.

Thirdly, there is confusion. These people do not understand why the minister is leaving and may not even know he/she has gone. They represent a fair number of people in any church; they are confused because they do not know what is happening.

Intentional interim ministry involves helping people to share their feelings, hopes and fears so that they can come together with a spirit of excitement about the future with a new minister.

### **IN THE MIDDLE**

The arrival of an Intentional Interim Minister provides a calming, experienced presence. While ensuring that the church continues to function, he/she guides it in the formation of a group of representative people from the congregation known as a Transition Team. With the Intentional Interim minister as their facilitator, they undertake a self-study of the church consisting of five areas:

1. Coming to terms with the church's recent and distant history
2. Leadership and decision making processes
3. New identity – mission, vision

4. Denominational links
5. Commitment to the new direction and leadership

The intentional process provides people with the opportunity to be informed of how the Church has and ought to operate and to be involved in establishing a new direction for the future.

The pastoral search may be included within area 5 above, or it may be delegated to a separately appointed Ministry Search Team and Facilitator. Because the information that the Transition Team develops will impact on the call, it is wise that the actual pastoral search does not commence until the self-study has concluded. There will thus be some valuable material to assist the church's discussion with any prospective new minister.

## **NEW BEGINNINGS**

Call: Whether pursuing the Intentional Interim concept or the regular approach of the Ministry Search Team, the outcome is the church's decision to accept the recommendation and call a new minister.

If the beginning goes well, the church will soon forget all about the interim time. The days in the wilderness fade and joy spreads. On the other hand, if the opposite is the case, then the minister and the church will soon be embroiled in conflict. Problems early in the minister's time will be likely to shorten his/her ministry. Usually the problems of the beginnings are linked to issues not resolved in the endings or the middle times. The real value of intentional interim ministry is in addressing such issues. It can make all the difference for the future of the church.

## **CONCLUSION**

Intentional Interim Ministry cannot be rushed; it takes time. The vacuum left after the departure of a minister often inclines churches to be in a hurry to fill the vacancy. Intentional Interim Ministry works on the premise that it is more important to get the next appointment right for the long term than to abdicate to short-term fears. Issues left unaddressed invariably resurface. Intentional Interim Ministry helps to put the church in a healthy position to make the most appropriate appointment. More detailed explanations of the process and testimonies from churches that have undertaken Intentional Interim Ministries are available.

## **THE CALL PROCESS**

### **A COMPARISON OF THE TRADITIONAL AND MULTI-INTERVIEW PROCEDURES**

This section offers an initial statement of the benefits and deficiencies of the traditional call process (one minister at a time) and the more recent trend towards the multi-interview approach (several ministers at the one time). Underlying this statement is an appreciation of the nature of the Call that lies at the very heart of a pastoral settlement. The importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in guiding both minister and people is paramount and the issue of process should be regarded as secondary to this.

#### **THE TRADITIONAL PROCESS: THE BENEFITS**

The traditional process does have a number of clearly understood benefits for both the Ministry Search Team and the minister being interviewed:

- 1.1 The Team remains clearly focussed on its task.
- 1.2 Ministers have indicated a strong preference for a non-competitive procedure as there appear to be strongly held reservations about comparisons being made with other ministers. These reservations arise from a deeply felt need to be open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit in considering an invitation from a church and the notion of being in "competition" with others runs counter to such an understanding.
- 1.3 The Ministry Search Team concentrates its efforts in a definite, ordered process clearly understood by all members.
- 1.4 The process has shown a very high level of effectiveness over the years although by no means fool proof.
- 1.5 The clear focus on one minister at a time provides for a much more easily managed procedure with regard to information gathering and priority setting.
- 1.6 The Team has the benefit of the services of Placement Taskforce in refining the pastoral profile, being offered lines of enquiry in keeping with that profile and the establishment of priorities in the search to be undertaken.

#### **THE TRADITIONAL PROCESS: THE LIMITATIONS**

- 2.1 The process can be very slow if the minister being approached takes too much time in responding.
- 2.2 There is a requirement for very high levels of patience and very good organisational procedures.
- 2.3 If an approach to a minister is unsuccessful, the process has to start all over again.

### **THE MULTI-INTERVIEW APPROACH: THE BENEFITS**

- 3.1 The Ministry Search Team may derive a sense of security from being able to give simultaneous attention to a range of options.
- 3.2 Approaching several ministers at once might give a heightened sense of making progress.
- 3.3 Interviews with several ministers at once will provide a range of responses that in turn may help the Team to sharpen its aspirations and hopes and better identify its needs.
- 3.4 The pursuit of a number of interviewees at once will give a clearer understanding of the range of personalities and leadership styles available.
- 3.5 There is the possibility of a faster outcome being achieved provided priorities can be clearly identified.

### **THE MULTI-INTERVIEW APPROACH: THE LIMITATIONS**

- 4.1 The knowledge that a multi-interview procedure is being pursued by a church may well discourage suitable ministers from responding to the invitation through reluctance to be compared with others.
- 4.2 The approach may have an underlying assumption that, through many interviews being undertaken, the right person will be found somewhere. This may not necessarily be the case.
- 4.3 There is the risk that the person who interviews best may be more attractive when compared with others but this is no guarantee that they are the best minister for the church. Again, the issue of Call cannot be emphasised too much with the focus being on the ministry of the Holy Spirit to minister and people rather than an unthinking reliance on good procedure alone.

## **SUGGESTED PROTOCOLS FOR MULTI-INTERVIEW PROCEDURES BY MINISTRY SEARCH TEAMS**

Unlike a secular workplace, when a minister considers an approach by a church implicit in the decision to be interviewed is some sense of call. This raises the expectation of ministers in a multi interview situation so that should the minister be unsuccessfully interviewed, there can be a sense of great disappointment and even confusion if he/she felt there was a sense of God's call.

This creates even further complications for the Facilitator who, in conveying a Ministry Search Team's decision to a number of interviewed ministers, will find it necessary to offer simultaneous support to, on the one hand, a minister being asked to enter into further discussions with the church and, on the other hand, one or more ministers who have to be told there is no further discussion to take place with the church. There is an obligation to all ministers being interviewed to offer support and pastoral care regardless of the outcome. This can place great pressure on the Facilitator at such times.

1. In the event of a Ministry Search Team approaching two or more ministers at the same time, it is essential that each minister be advised of this simultaneous process.
2. It is incumbent upon Ministry Search Teams that, where there are conversations proceeding with several ministers, the procedures should be as even handed as possible and according to an agreed set of criteria to be determined by the Team prior to conversations being undertaken.
3. It is recommended that a Facilitator (or other person exercising a similar role) when inviting a minister to participate in an interview with the Ministry Search Team at the same time as other ministers, should not reveal the identity of the church making such a request. The reason for this is to help the minister reflect on their openness to a change in ministry without being influenced by the identity of the church making the request or the procedure being followed.
4. Initial interviews should be at an exploratory level only for the purposes of establishing with clarity broad details of background, experience, doctrinal perspective, gifts for ministry and so on. Such a procedure will assist the Team in establishing a priority for the conduct of interviews at greater depth. We would suggest that initial interviews be conducted in the same manner for all ministers interviewed, i.e. limited to 1½ hours, be formally structured and be an information gathering exercise.
5. Ministry Search Teams should be encouraged to recognise that the conduct of several interviews in-depth simultaneously is inadvisable as such a procedure may unnecessarily raise expectations which will then be proportionately diminished when it is known that a number of such interviews are being pursued at the same time.
6. When a Ministry Search Team determines that a particular line of enquiry will not be pursued further, the minister in question should be advised of such an outcome by the Facilitator without delay.
7. If the Facilitator knows that a minister on the interview list of the Ministry Search Team is in conversation with another church, no approach should be made to that minister until the outcome of such a conversation has been finalised.
8. A greater responsibility rests on the Facilitator to keep Placement Taskforce informed of all lines of enquiry to avoid multiple approaches being made to the same minister.

## **SOME SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR A CHURCH TO ASK THE MINISTER**

### **SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

Give greater weight to the minister's demonstrated abilities than to his/her ability to engage them interpersonally in the interview.

Be aware of the tendency to make premature decisions based on the first few minutes of the interview. Consciously try to suspend making decisions about the applicant until the end of the interview.

Develop an organised plan of how the group will ask the questions so that they discuss all essential topics in depth. It is kind to allow the early questions to emphasise the minister's strengths and successes. After the group has built up some rapport then it is easier to deal with the more difficult questions.

Be sensitive to the minister and his/her spouse. It is not easy to talk in depth to a group of relative strangers. Deal with the minister with the same degree of gentleness that you would like for yourself in the same situation.

### **EXAMPLE QUESTIONS**

1. Tell us about your childhood. What are some memories of your parents and peers that significantly shaped your attitudes towards God, work and the values you hold today?
2. When did you first feel God's call on your life? How and why did you decide to enter the ministry?
3. Can you identify some of the people who had a significant influence on your life? What impact has each of them had on your thinking and methods of ministry?
4. Describe the various ministries you have had to date. Talk about some of the successes you have felt and some of the difficulties. What have you learnt through your mistakes?
5. How would you describe your style of leadership?
6. What do you believe is the healthiest relationship between a minister, the church leadership, the congregation and the denomination?
7. How have your faith and theology changed since you first entered the ministry?
8. What is the process you go through when you prepare a sermon? What goals do you strive to achieve through your preaching?
9. What emphasis do you place on pastoral counselling? Describe your training and experience in this area.
10. What is your philosophy regarding hospital and home pastoral visits?
11. What approaches to a congregation's financial stewardship do you prefer? What methods do you use to appeal to people about their giving?

12. What is the ministry that you would call your specialty?
13. How much do you like to be involved in denominational affairs?
14. What issues do you see as being the most important ones facing Christians, particularly CofC, today?
15. Explore any issues that are of particular importance to your own congregation. (theological or social issues)
16. (Naming an identified issue) how do you think you might go about resolving it?
17. By what title do you prefer to be called?
18. How do you maintain your spiritual, emotional and physical health? How do you like to spend your free time?
19. How do you allocate time to spend with your family?
20. What are your plans for personal and professional growth?

#### **QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK OF A MINISTER'S SPOUSE:**

1. In what ways would you like to be involved in ministry, if any?
2. What is your attitude to your husband's/wife's vocation?
3. Tell us about your children. Do they have any particular needs that should be considered in relation to a possible call to this church?
4. What are your concerns about a possible move?
5. Are there any things about our church or community that would cause you apprehension if you were called to come here?

## QUESTIONS A MINISTER MIGHT ASK AT AN INTERVIEW

There are three types of questions that are useful for a minister to raise.

### QUESTIONS OF CENSUS SUCH AS:

What are the talents, skills and interests that the congregation bring to the church? Questions about the area in which the church is situated. Do church members live locally? Have there been any major demographic shifts in the area in the last ten years? How has the church addressed these?

### QUESTIONS ABOUT ISSUES SUCH AS:

Is the church inward or outward looking? Have changes in worship practice disrupted the congregation? Is there/was there any contention over the previous minister? Have there been any theological or other divisions within the congregation? Has a building program alienated anyone? Are there any issues that affect the local community which could impinge on the church?

### QUESTIONS ON STRUCTURES

Discover the formal and informal networks within the congregation. How are relationships with the neighbouring churches? Ecumenical relationships? Relationships with other churches of the denomination? Ministers' networks?

Depending on what information the church provides first, there may only need to be some follow-up questions asked. The primary purpose is to learn the church's attitudes and expectations. It can be far more helpful to understand the church's likes and dislikes than, say, the financial condition of the church in the last ten years.

### POTENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What gifts for ministry is the church desiring in a new minister? Why are you of particular interest to you?
2. What do the leadership perceive to be the special strengths in ministry in the church at the present time? What ministries are being exercised effectively?
3. What is the potential for outreach within the local community?
4. What is the most significant event in the life of this congregation since you have been a member?
5. Aside from the upheaval of looking for a new minister, what has been the most upsetting event in the life of this church? Are there any issues/conflicts from the past which remain unresolved? What still needs to be done? Are there any specific expectations of the new minister as far as sorting out is concerned?
6. In your opinion, what areas of concern need to be addressed by this congregation? What special needs are there in the church that the new minister would have to address? Are there any special crises in the church at present? If so, what are they, how are they being handled and what progress is being made?
7. What special needs are there in the local community that the church should be addressing?
8. What kinds of things did your previous minister do particularly well?



9. What were the circumstances surrounding your previous minister's departure?
10. In what areas do you wish your previous minister had more expertise?
11. What formal and informal methods of support have you used in the past to help your minister to become a better minister?
12. In what ways do the leadership and the minister work together? ie. Is there teamwork at the leadership level and if so, how does it work and what are the expectations?
13. Tell me about the deacons, elders etc.
14. Has the minister's family traditionally taken an active role in the church? In what ways will the church provide opportunities for the minister's children to find their niche?
15. What specific expectations does the church have of the minister and his/her spouse?
16. How should your minister spend his/her time? In the course of a week, how much time should be spent in prayer? Personal study? Sermon preparation? Administration? Individual and family counselling? Visiting? With the family?
17. In what ways does the church relate to other churches and what are the expectations of the church regarding the minister's relationship with other clergy?
18. Is the minister expected to be involved in Religious Education in the local school?
19. What organisations in the congregation are the most active and successful?
20. Beyond calling a minister and its related concerns, what is the highest congregational priority for the next twelve months?
21. What goals have you established to grow the church? What methods can be used to achieve these goals? What is the vision of the church for its ministry in the future? i.e. Where is the church headed? (If there is no answer start getting nervous.)
22. How open is the church to change and innovation in order for the congregation to fulfil its ministry in the most effective manner?
23. Have you any plans to expand staff or buildings?
24. How financially stable is this congregation?
25. What programs do you plan to implement in the next ten years?
26. Are there any specific emphases in doctrine or style of ministry that a new minister would need to be aware of, including attitudes towards:
  - The charismatic movement
  - Women in ministry
  - Biblical inspiration and related matters
  - Contemporary hymnology

27. What is the attitude of the church to growth in all its many dimensions including numerical growth?
28. What provision does the church make for:
  - In-service training for the minister through conferences and other similar events?
  - Further education of a more comprehensive kind such as course work at College?
  - Attendance at events conducted for ministers by the CofC?
  - Ministry beyond the church in other places (even overseas)?

At some stage of the interview process, probably towards the end, it will be necessary to address the following matters:

- Stipend (is it adjusted automatically according to CofC recommendations?)
- Allowances (which ones are payable?)
- Superannuation
- Arrangements of a special kind if this is a part-time pastorate.

## **TEAM MINISTRY MATTERS**

If being interviewed with a view to being called as the senior minister of a team already in place in the church, the following will need to be explored:

1. What are the job descriptions or ministry roles of the present staff? (If so, ask for copies, if not, request that this be done and start to get nervous again)
2. To whom will staff be accountable? To the Senior Minister, the Board, or a mixture, or unknown? (They should be accountable to the Board through the senior minister.)
3. What tenure do existing staff have?
4. How will the church Board respond if, in establishing new directions under your leadership, it becomes clear that one or more positions either need to be reworked (with the same personnel) or significantly changed (with different personnel)?
5. Further, will the church Board accept responsibility for working with the senior minister to bring such change about if deemed necessary, including helping existing staff find ministry opportunities elsewhere?
6. Will the church Board acquaint existing staff with the possibility of such changes as part of the call arrangements (i.e. ensure that they are forewarned of possible changes as outlined above)?
7. If more than one staff member preaches, will the senior minister be in charge of pulpit arrangements? (A positive answer is expected)

If being interviewed for an associate role, the above questions can be adapted giving attention to:

1. Ministry responsibilities and how these relate to other team roles (a written statement is essential).
2. Lines of accountability need to be clearly established.
3. Relationships with the senior minister need to be clarified.

## CHECKLIST OF MATTERS WHICH NEED CLARIFICATION

### BEFORE A CALL IS ISSUED

Has the church agreed in principle that it will automatically follow the recommendations made by the CofC in respect to salary, reimbursements, superannuation and similar matters? If not, what variations will be made? It should be noted that a number of churches vary the recommended stipend by an agreed percentage.

- Basic salary (CofC recommended amount) or \$            pw
- House allowance if rent free manse is not provided \$            pw
- Superannuation provision \$            pw
- Reimbursement for:
  - travel including depreciation (or replacement) & running costs \$            pw
  - books, magazines, journals & library related expenses \$            pw
  - provision of hospitality including entertaining visitors \$            pw
  - phone rental and official calls actual costs
  - petty cash provision (stamps, stationary etc.) actual costs
- Annual recreational leave of at least four weeks, the church to supply the pulpit.
- Consideration for the occasional weekend off.
- Note how long it will be before minister is due to take long service leave.
- If a rent-free manse is provided, the church is responsible for its maintenance including floor coverings, regular painting and insurance.
- Will the church cover costs for the minister to attend the annual School of Ministry?
- What attitude does the church have to the minister pursuing further in-service education, and is it prepared to share the costs?
- Does the church recognise the value in the Minister having denominational involvement?
- Is there an agreement to an annual review by both minister and the church with a view to enhancing the ministry of the minister and the effective working of the church as a whole? If not annually, how frequently? It is a good idea to settle on a date and adhere to that time. Never wait until there is some concern that could precipitate a review.
- What are the details of study commitment if the minister is a student?
- From what date will the call be effective? Is the call for a fixed term or open ended?
- The church is expected to meet removal costs. In the event of a very expensive long distance move, advice is available from CofC to help make arrangements about costs. Some assistance might be available.
- Who will arrange the Induction service? What role will the Facilitator fill? Does the prospective minister expect to preach? Will the time and date chosen allow participation by other churches and neighbouring clergy?
- Will there be a public welcome other than in association with the Induction service? What should be the extent of the guest list? Denominational and community leaders?
- It is strongly suggested that the terms and conditions agreed to should be couched in a Letter of Understanding that is signed by the church secretary and the minister. This letter should contain any other relevant agreements that have been reached. A copy of the letter should be forwarded to the Placement Taskforce. This aspect of the call of a minister is of greater importance in recent days and should be regarded as of great importance in the settlement of a minister with a church.

## CCVT POLICY: LIFE LONG LEARNING

Affirming the importance of personal growth and continuing education in ministry it is recommended that:

1. Ministers and churches be committed to the in-service training of ministers.
2. Churches encourage their ministers by including a minimum 40 contact hours per year provision in the minister's terms and conditions and by contributing to the cost of those courses chosen by the minister and approved by the church Board.
3. Training courses, retreats, conferences and learning experiences be organised by Communities Team each year and that details of courses covered by or recommended be made available to ministers.

## DOCUMENTATION

Each year CCVT updates the Guidelines for Churches and Ministers: Stipends, Conditions and Statements of Understanding. This is an important document for both the church and the minister to have a copy of as it provides comprehensive information regarding many of the practical matters related to a minister's position.

A copy of the full Guidelines can be obtained from the CCVT website or from the CCVT offices in Fairfield.

## ARRANGING THE SERVICE OF INDUCTION

It is the role of the incoming minister in conjunction with the church leadership and the Facilitator to make the arrangements for a service of induction. The Facilitator should take responsibility to check that this happens and to be a resource person if necessary.

An induction service is a highlight in the life of the incoming minister and the church, so it is important to make the service one of celebration. A full church of happy people is a great encouragement to a new pastor and the church.

### PLANNING THE SERVICE

If there is to be a special guest speaker/s it is wise to check first on their availability on the suggested date.

There is no set protocol as to when an induction service should be held, except that it is usually within the first couple of weeks of the new minister's starting at the church. Some services are held during the week, others at the weekend. It is kind to consider the needs of any people who may want to come some distance for the induction. It may be appropriate for the church to offer overnight accommodation for guests.

It is up to the incoming minister to suggest who will take part in the service in consultation with the church leadership. Again, the Facilitator can be the resource person to help here.

Who should be invited? This is really up to those arranging the service but here are some suggestions:

- The people of the church should be kept fully informed and be part of the welcoming of the new minister and any visitors at the service;
- Members of the minister's previous church;
- Representatives of the CofC;
- Any individuals who have played a significant part in the process of the call;
- The family of the incoming minister;
- Leadership and members of the neighbouring churches, both Baptist and others (perhaps through the local inter-church Council);
- In some cases, key people of the community in which the church is set;
- It can be an appropriate time to invite the local press or at least ensure an article and photo is submitted to the local press for publication.

Invitations to special guests should have an RSVP to help with planning for the service. There is often a time in the service when apologies are read.

Careful preparation of all aspects of the service will enhance the celebration. This includes orders of service, flowers, special music, and refreshments. It seems traditional that there be flowers for a female minister or for a male minister's wife.

## ON THE DAY

Make sure there are welcomers to receive those who have come to the service and to show them to a seat. If there are special guests, arrange for seats for them to be reserved at the front of the church. Those with reserved seats should know in advance as should the people on the door so that they can be taken to their seats.

Special guests, particularly community leaders and representatives from the CofC, should be welcomed at an appropriate point in the service. If there are to be refreshments after the service, significant leaders from within the church should be briefed to conduct the special guests to the right place and care for them for the duration of their stay at the church, introducing them to the new minister and to members of the church.

There is a part in the service when the history of the call is recounted to the congregation. This is usually done by a lay leader of the church but can be done by the Facilitator. The incoming minister is also offered the opportunity to tell of his/her response to the call.

There is also the laying on of hands. Make sure the people know who is involved and when in the service this is and they are seated in a place where they can take part easily.

This is an appropriate time to formally recognise the part that the Facilitator has played in the call, and sometimes to thank those in the church who have played a significant role in the life of the church leading up to the call of the minister. It is generally wise though to have already publicly acknowledged the part that any interim minister/s might have played in the previous months.