

HANDBOOK
for
SPECIALIZED INTERIM MINISTRY
in the Synod of Mid-America

Introduction:

Many congregations in the Synod of Mid-America have benefited from the services of a Specialized Interim Minister (SIM) who has guided them through the transition between pastors. The aptitude, training and skills of the SIM are designed to help the congregation move forward on a defined agenda which facilitates increased health, vitality and readiness to proceed into the next phase of its ministry with new pastoral leadership.

This handbook is intended to be helpful for congregations seeking a SIM, ministers considering becoming a SIM, and Classis personnel charged with supervision of a church being served by a SIM. Included here you will find the following sections:

1. *POLICIES* affecting Specialized Interim Ministry in the Synod of Mid-America
2. *FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENTS* from the *RCA Book of Church Order* which apply to Specialized Interim Ministry.
3. *STEPS FOR A CHURCH* to move through to consider and obtain the services of a Specialized Interim Minister and a Church Request for an Interim Minister form.
4. *STEPS FOR A MINISTER* to move through to become a Specialized Interim Minister.
5. *A STANDARD CONTRACT* for Specialized Interim Ministry
6. *EVALUATION FORMS* for interim ministers.
7. *ADDITIONAL RESOURCES* regarding Specialized Interim Ministry.

Only the first section regarding “*Policies ...*” is intended to be mandated. It is authoritative in each classis as adopted by that classis. .

Other sections of this document may not have the force of “policy” but should be considered “standard operating procedures” which will provide fairness and good order as quality interim ministry is provided in this synod.

Section 1: *POLICIES* affecting Specialized Interim Ministry in the Synod of Mid-America.

- A. A classis shall approve the contract between one of its churches and a Specialized Interim Minister (SIM) who has been registered as qualified by the General Synod and/or the Regional Synod. The initial contract shall be for a minimum of six months but may not exceed one year. The contract may be renewed in increments of three months, up to a total of 18 months of service. Contracts may be terminated by either party with 30 days notice.
- B. The Classis may permit the SIM to preside at meetings of the consistory if invited to do so, but the SIM shall not have the right to vote. The SIM does not replace the Classis appointed supervisor nor may the SIM serve as the Classis Supervisor. (Notice: This is more restrictive than the *Book of Church Order*.)

- C. After seeking the advice of the congregation, the selection of a SIM rests on the consistory and the Classis. A person who has previously served as an installed pastor of that congregation may not serve as a SIM in that particular congregation. A clear and specific contract will be signed by the SIM, the church and the Classis of jurisdiction. A copy of this contract will be filed with the Classis, the Synod of Mid-America (SMA) and the RCA Ministry Services office. The Standard Interim Ministry Contract will be used. (See Section 5.)
- D. The Classis may strongly urge or require that a church under its general supervision contract with a SIM. The Classis should understand its own financial obligations for such a prescription. ("The Classis shall exercise general superintendence...over the churches within its bounds..." BCO, Part II, Art. 2, Sec. 1, p. 27.)
- E. A non-endorsed minister may be employed as a minister under contract (MUC) and as such is regulated by the appropriate BCO requirements (Part II, Art. 7, Sec. 4&5., p. 32).
- F. At the request of the Consistory the SIM may be a resource and/or advisor to the search process. The nature of this responsibility should be addressed in the SIM contract. It is important that all parties understand that the SIM shall not be permitted to be called to fill the pastoral vacancy in the church s/he serves.
- G. If the SIM does not have another assignment when his/her present contract concludes, via completion of its term or 30 day notification by the church, the following provisions apply:
 - a. The RCA congregation that was most recently served by the SIM will provide at least one month of salary and benefits during this down time.
 - b. If the RCA congregation is unable to meet this provision, the classis of jurisdiction and the SMA will provide equal shares of financial assistance if the request of the church is valid.
 - c. If the SIM is a member of a classis within the Synod of Mid-America and if the SIM continues without opportunity for service after one month, the classis in which the SIM is serving and the regional synod will provide equal shares of one-half of the SIM salary plus the full cost of the RCA insurance for months two and three.
 - d. If the SIM has terminated the contract, this down time provision does not apply.
- H. A SIM is expected to increase his/her competency in conflict and crisis management and organizational development, meet with SIM colleagues regularly, and maintain contact with his/her classis of jurisdiction and the Synod of Mid-America.
- I. The SIM will report to the Classis concerning the progress of the interim ministry at three (3) and six (6) month intervals and at the conclusion of the assignment. The Classis supervisor will initiate an evaluation of the interim ministry at three (3) and six (6) month intervals and at the conclusion of the assignment. These reports and evaluations will be submitted to the Classis and to the Synod of Mid-America.
- J. The SIM is encouraged to become a member of the classis of which he/she serves.

Section 2: *FOUNDATION STATEMENTS from the RCA Book of Church Order which apply to Specialized Interim Ministry.*

The RCA *Book of Church Order* (Part II, Article 7, Section 3-6, p. 32) mandates that have a bearing on SIM policy:

Sec. 3: The Classis shall appoint one of its ministers as supervisor of all proceedings of the consistory of a church without a minister or senior minister. The supervisor shall attend all formal meetings of the consistory, due notice having been given.

Sec. 4: The Classis, at the request of the church or with its consent, shall appoint one of its ministers or a minister of another Classis, or of another approved body, the minister under contract of a church that is without an installed minister. The appointment shall be for a term of not more than one year. It shall be subject to renewal after proper review. The minister under contract shall perform the duties and receive the financial support which is agreed upon and shall report to Classis whenever that body shall require it.

Sec. 5: The Classis shall determine whether a minister under contract who is also a member of the Classis shall be appointed supervisor of the church served. The minister under contract shall preside at meetings of the consistory of the church if invited by the consistory to do so, but shall not have the right to vote.

Sec. 6: The Classis, at the request of the church or with its consent may appoint a specialized interim minister to serve that church between installed ministers, subject to the provisions of Sections 4 and 5, provided the minister has been endorsed as qualified by the General Synod or its designated agent.

Section 3a: *SUGGESTED STEPS FOR A CHURCH* to move through to consider and obtain the services of a Specialized Interim Minister.

- _____1. When a pastoral vacancy is imminent, that congregation's vice president or departing pastor needs to notify the appropriate classis committee Chairperson.

- _____2. The classis committee Chairperson is then to:
 - _____a. notify the appropriate Classis committee which will see that a supervisor is appointed for the church.
 - _____b. inform the church's Vice-President of Consistory about Specialized Interim Ministry (SIM).
 - _____c. ask the Synod to send the church the appropriate information regarding SIM.
 - _____d. advise the church to appoint a short term Transition Committee.

- _____3. The Transition Committee or the Consistory itself will:
 - _____a. oversee the transfer of all pastoral responsibilities to cover the church's immediate needs.
 - _____b. conduct an exit interview.
 - _____c. arrange for appropriate farewell celebrations.
 - _____d. consider whether the congregation should seek the services of a SIM.
(Note: A Pastoral Search Committee should not be appointed until a SIM is in place.)

- _____4. The Classis committee will:
 - _____a. appoint a supervisor for the vacant church as soon as possible.
 - _____b. inform the church of the necessity of considering only certified or provisionally certified SIM candidates and the necessity of writing a SIM contract which will require Classis approval.
 - _____c. in certain circumstances strongly urge or even require a church to engage the services of a SIM. They may also need to arrange a Classis financial subsidy.

- _____5. The Church's Transition Committee or other consistory appointed committee should follow these steps as they seek the services of a SIM:
 - _____a. Complete the Church Request for an Interim Minister form and send it to the Synod.
 - _____b. The Synod, in conjunction with the Classis, will recommend all SIM candidates to meet that congregation's needs and will send appropriate profiles to the Classis Supervisor.
 - _____c. Evaluate the candidates, checking references and perhaps listening to him/her preach.
 - _____d. Interview candidates and make a selection with counsel from their supervisor.

- _____e. Using the Standard SIM Contract form, negotiate a contract that is acceptable to the church, the candidate and the Classis. The supervisor will assist with this process.
 - _____f. Obtain the approval of the appropriate Classis committee of both the candidate and the contract.
 - _____g. Before the SIM begins his/her work, fully inform the congregation about the purpose of SIM and about their SIM minister.
(Note: The above process will normally be able to be completed in six to eight weeks.)
 - _____h. Arrange for a brief Commissioning Service with a Classis representative present to help launch a positive SIM ministry.
- _____6. The SIM, the Classis supervisor, and the consistory need to:
- _____a. work out a clear division of labor especially regarding presiding at consistory meetings and assisting the Search Committee.
 - _____b. schedule three month, six month and concluding reports and evaluations using Interim Ministry Evaluation Forms furnished by the Synod's office.
 - _____c. understand that the Classis supervisor is to moderate any consistory discussions regarding termination or extension of the SIM contract. The supervisor will also preside at all congregational meetings pertaining to the call of a new pastor.
(Note: The SIM will not replace and may not serve as the Classis supervisor.)

Section 3b: CHURCH REQUEST FOR AN INTERIM MINISTER

Church _____ Classis _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Church Contact Person _____

Address _____

Work Phone _____ Home Phone _____

Classis Supervisor _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Date of this request _____

List Your Church's Paid Staff - Full Time (FT) / Part Time (PT) – and their position:

Previous Pastor _____ Number of yrs. at Church _____

Reasons church is requesting Interim Ministry _____

Issues your church may be dealing with or needs to deal with _____

Worship service times _____

Average attendance at each worship service _____

Preferred style of worship _____

Qualities or skills desired in an interim minister _____

Preferred interim contract will begin about _____ (date) and conclude about _____ (date)

Do you have a parsonage available to the interim? _____. If not, do you have other housing available if needed?

We are willing to abide by the Specialized Interim Ministry policies of our regional synod and our classis.

Signed _____ Office _____

Synod use only

Interim Candidates recommended _____ (date profile sent)

Section 4: STEPS FOR A MINISTER to move through to become a Specialized Interim Minister.

Candidates need to consult with both the Regional Synod and the RCA Ministry Services office.

Candidates must obtain a letter of endorsement from their Classis Executive Committee which is to be sent to the Synod and to the RCA Ministry Services office.

Candidates must be interviewed and approved by the Synod and recommended to Ministry Services. The decision on SIM candidacy will be based on personal qualifications and the perceived need for additional SIMs in the Synod of Mid-America.

A candidate may receive provisional endorsement from the Synod to allow him/her to serve as an interim for one year if the above steps have been taken and a plan for interim training is in place.

Candidates must complete the necessary interim training provided by the *Interim Ministry Network* and must ultimately receive their certification.
(<http://www.imnedu.org/>)

Candidates must receive final endorsement from Ministry Services.

Endorsed candidates are expected to attend quarterly meetings for support, training and networking. They should also seek out additional training periodically to enhance their insight and skills.

Section 5: STANDARD SPECIALIZED INTERIM MINISTER CONTRACT

This contract between the consistory of _____
Church of _____ (city & state), the Rev. _____
and the Classis of _____ is for the purpose of providing interim
pastoral services for this congregation.

This contract is effective on _____ (date) and extends for _____ months (# of
months), through _____ (date).
(The contract shall be for a minimum of six months, but shall not exceed one year. The contract
may be renewed in increments of three months, up to a total of 18 months of service.)

This contract may be terminated by either party with 30 days notice being given.

If the Specialized Interim Minister (SIM) does not have another assignment when this contract
concludes, via completion of its term or 30 day notification by the church, the church is required
to provide up at least one month of salary and benefits during this down time. If the
congregation is unable to meet this provision, the church will apply to the Classis of
_____ and the Synod of Mid-America which will provide equal shares of
financial assistance if the request of the church is valid. If the SIM continues without opportunity
for service after one month, the classis in which the SIM is serving and the regional synod will
provide equal shares of one-half of the SIM salary plus the full cost of the RCA insurance for
months two and three. [Note: Delete this sentence if the SIM is not a member of a classis within the Synod of Mid-
America.] If the SIM terminates this contract, this down time provision does not apply.

The SIM shall not be considered as a candidate for a call to this church.

SIM RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Will provide normal pastoral and administrative leadership during the interim period.
- Will provide special leadership, as needed, for helping the congregation deal with grief and
conflict and for assisting the church in the development of a direction for its future.
- Will work with church leaders to accomplish these five developmental interim tasks:
 - Learning from our congregation's history.
 - Clarifying our identity and mission as we focus on our next chapter.
 - Facilitating leadership shifts.
 - Strengthening ties to the Classis.
 - Preparing for a new pastor.

Will ____ Will not ____ be a resource and/or advisor in the search process: The nature of this
responsibility will be: _____

Will submit the required reports as outlined in the Synod of Mid-America SIM policy.

Additional Responsibilities or Explanations of the above Responsibilities:

The SIM will average at least _____ hours per week in service to the church; these hours
may include other RCA responsibilities as agreed to by the consistory and the SIM.

The Classis will provide a supervisor to work with the consistory and the interim minister. The SIM will not replace or serve as the Classis Supervisor. The SIM, the Classis Supervisor and the Consistory will work out a clear division of labor regarding presiding at Consistory meetings. The Classis Supervisor will preside at all congregational meetings pertaining to securing a new pastor.

CHURCH RESPONSIBILITIES:

Cash Salary of \$_____ per month.
Housing Allowance of \$_____ per month.
Accountable Business Expenses of \$_____ per contract term, OR car allowance of \$_____ per mile or actual expenses as outlined in Classis requirements.
RCA Annuities and Insurances as per Classis requirements.
Social Security reimbursement of \$_____ per month as per Classis requirements.
Professional Development of \$_____ per contract term and _____ week(s) as outlined in Classis requirements.
_____ weeks vacation.

Additional Salary/Benefit Considerations:

The Consistory will provide support for and will work together with the SIM on interim tasks and establishing a direction for the church's ministry and mission.

ADDITIONAL AGREEMENTS:

SIGNATURES:

_____ Vice President of Consistory	_____ Date	_____ Specialized Interim Minister	_____ Date
_____ Classis Supervisor	_____ Date	_____ Stated Clerk of Classis	_____ Date

(Copy of contract given to church, SIM, classis, and the Synod of Mid-America.)

Section 6: EVALUATION FORMS for interim ministry.

INTERIM MINISTRY THREE MONTH EVALUATION

To be completed by the Classis Supervisor in conversation with the Consistory and to be discussed with the interim minister.

1. To what extent is the S.I.M. meeting the expectations of the congregation as outlined in the contract? _____
What areas need improvement? _____
2. What progress has been made on the S.I.M.'s five developmental tasks?
 - a. Learning from history:
 - b. Exploring a new identity:
 - c. Facilitating leadership shifts:
 - d. Strengthening denominational ties:
 - e. Preparing for a new pastor:
3. What approach is the S.I.M. using for the assessment process? _____
What progress has been made? _____
4. What basic issues are emerging that will have to be addressed? _____
What resources will be needed to help address these issues? _____
5. What will need special attention during the next three months? _____
6. What is the status of the search process? _____
7. Has the S.I.M. completed a written three month report describing the current situation including leadership, attendance, morale, spiritual life, programs; identifying the issues; and laying out a plan to address the issues? _____

Please sign below indicating that you have discussed this with each other.

Interim Minister _____

Date _____

Classis Supervisor _____

Date _____

Vice-President of Consistory _____

Date _____

Send a copy of this to the Synod of Mid-America, 8122 W. Sauk Trail, Frankfort, IL 60423 and to the chair of the appropriate Classis committee.

INTERIM MINISTRY SIX MONTH EVALUATION

To be completed by the Classis Supervisor in conversation with the Consistory and to be discussed with the interim minister.

To what extent is the S.I.M. meeting the expectations of the congregation as outlined in the contract? _____

What areas need improvement? _____

How helpful has the S.I.M. been in:

Preaching? _____

Pastoral Care? _____

Administration? _____

What progress has been made on the S.I.M.s five developmental tasks?

Learning from history: _____

Exploring a new identity: _____

Facilitating leadership shifts: _____

Strengthening denominational ties: _____

Preparing for a new pastor: _____

What key issues need to be addressed? _____

What progress is being made in addressing these issues? _____

What is the status of the search process? _____

How is the S.I.M. relating to this process? _____

What will need special attention during the next three months? _____

Has the S.I.M. completed a written progress report describing future prospects and alternatives for this congregation? _____

Please sign below indicating that you have discussed this with each other.

Interim Minister _____

Date _____

Classis Supervisor _____

Date _____

Vice-President of Consistory _____

Date _____

Send a copy of this to the Synod of Mid-America, 8122 W. Sauk Trail, Frankfort, IL 60423 and to the chair of the appropriate Classis committee.

INTERIM MINISTRY CONCLUDING EVALUATION

To be completed by the Classis Supervisor and to be discussed with the Consistory and the Interim Minister.

1. What was the duration of this interim assignment? _____
Was that too brief, too long, just right? _____
2. Were the contractual agreements of the church to the interim and the interim to the church satisfied? _____
If not, in what way? _____
3. To what extent did the gifts, passions and priorities of this interim minister fit this church situation? _____
4. What are the strengths of this interim? _____
5. In what areas does this interim minister need to grow? _____
6. To what extent did the interim prepare this congregation for a new pastor? _____
7. Did the interim complete a final written report outlining the assessment process and the search process that were used and identifying the issues this congregation will need to deal with in the next two years? _____

Please sign below indicating that you have discussed this with each other.

Interim Minister _____	Date _____
Classis Supervisor _____	Date _____
Vice-President of Consistory _____	Date _____

Send a copy of this to the Synod of Mid-America, 8122 W. Sauk Trail, Frankfort, IL 60423 and to the chair of the appropriate committee of your Classis.

Section 7: *ADDITIONAL RESOURCES* regarding Specialized Interim Ministry.

1. *Temporary Shepherds*, is a Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry, Roger S. Nicholson, ed., Alban Institute Publication, 1998. This very helpful 205 page resource book can be ordered from the RCA Distribution Center at 1-800-968-7221.
2. *A SIM for (Name) Church?* is a 5" x 8" bulletin insert that can be adapted for your church to provide basic information to your congregation regarding Specialized Interim Ministry.
3. *Appropriate Goals for the Interim Period*.
4. *Why Call an Interim Pastor?* is a brief article by Roger Schwarze in the July, 1996 issue of *Net Results*.
5. *Paving the Way*, an article in the Western Seminary Alumni Newsletter of November, 1999, about Rick Veenstra.
6. *Litanies of Welcome and Farewell to the Interim Pastor*, are commissioning services for Specialized Interim Ministers from *Temporary Shepherds*, Roger S. Nicholson, ed., Alban Institute Publication, 1998.
7. Coordination of Specialized Interim Ministry within the Synod is provided by:

Randy Kooy
Synod of Mid-America, RCA
8122 West Sauk Trail
Frankfort, IL 60423
Phone: 815-464-9181
rkooy@rca.org