

Interim Ministry

A Handbook for Parishes



The Diocese of New Westminster

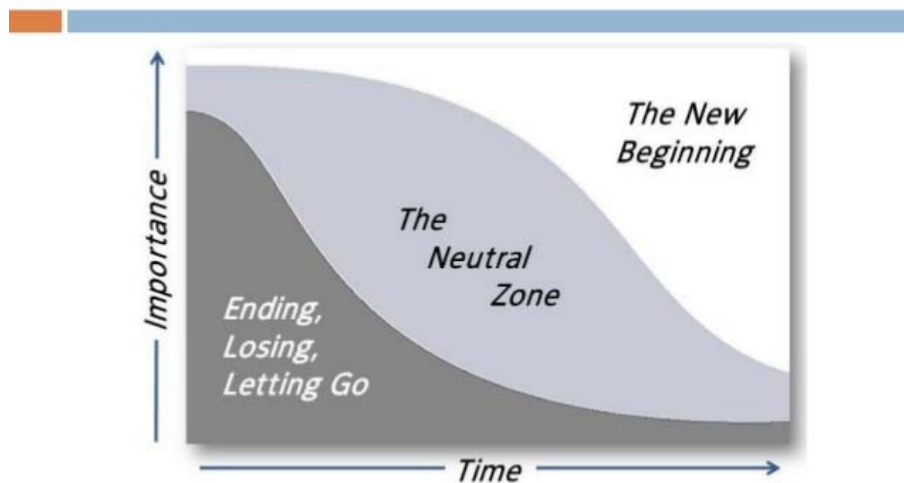
Transition

A Larger Spiritual and Psychological Process

The moment that a rector or vicar, in consultation with the bishop, announces their resignation or retirement, a period of transition begins in the parish. This transition period is a time of many different emotions, ideas, hopes, and concerns and practical things that need attention. These all naturally emerge as individuals and a community anticipate saying goodbye to their current clergy leader, and as they anticipate going through the process of seeking a new clergy leader, deciding who they wish to recommend for the bishop's appointment and beginning a new phase of life together with their new incumbent.

The writer William Bridges has outlined what he calls the "transition process" that occurs anytime an important change occurs for an individual or a group of people.

Transition Model – William Bridges



<http://imjoeboe.wordpress.com/2011/04/27/transitions/>

Bridges' point is that transition times are made up of a mix both in a group and within the inner life of individuals of from

- a) ending what came before, with all the feelings and impulses related to this,
- b) time in the "neutral zone" (a time of uncertainty, anxiety, creativity and possibility)
- c) time of new beginnings (when settling into a new reality begins to take shape).

In a parish setting, all these dimensions of a broad transition time are also true. The aim of those leading the interim process is to do their best to guide the parish and its people during such a time of transition, facilitating these three dimensions and moving through the transition in as graceful a way as possible while attending to the tasks that need attention in the interim period

An Overview of the Interim Ministry Period

After formal notice of resignation or retirement of a Rector or Vicar is given to the Bishop and the Parish, the Regional Archdeacon meets with the Churchwardens and the Parish Council to discuss the interim ministry process, the role of the interim priest in charge, and the place of the canonical committee's work within that process.

The process of selecting and appointing an Interim Priest-in-Charge follows. Those priests who have been trained in interim ministry are invited to apply by sending their resume and cover letter to the Archbishop's Office. The Canonical Committee interviews applicants and makes a recommendation for an appointment to the Archbishop. Ideally, an Interim Priest will be in place soon after the Rector or Vicar leaves. However, in some cases, Sunday supply may be needed to bridge the gap.

Broadly speaking, interim ministry, besides supporting the parish in its life as a parish in many normal ways, is meant to give the Parish an opportunity to do some intentional reflecting on i) where it is now, ii) where it has been, and iii) where it wants to go.

Through such things as conversational round-tables, parish town-hall meetings, surveys followed by discussion of survey results, consulting with groups, guilds and individuals, information is gathered, stories are told, dreams are cast and discernment undertaken. This process is led by the Interim Priest-in-Charge in consultation with the Churchwardens and others appointed by the Parish Council. Most parishes find using a diocesan consultant or outside facilitator also useful. The data generated during the interim process will be useful to the Canonical Committee's work on the profile when this work begins.

For detail on the work of the Canonical Committee, see the separate booklet on this on the Diocesan website.

A Definition of the Role of the Interim Priest in Charge

Recall that the responsibilities of a priest who leads a parish include

1. Taking responsibility for worship, including the sacraments, preaching, and music



2. Providing opportunities for Christian formation, such as Bible study, preparation for baptism and confirmation, introductions to Christianity and Anglicanism, spiritual development, and the like



3. Providing for pastoral care



4. Tending to the life and general business of the parish (with Parish Council and others).



**Interim Priests in Charge
concern themselves with
all of these matters.
They also attend to
specific challenges
and
opportunities
unique
to the
Interim Period**

Interim priests lead parishes through a time of transition between permanent incumbencies. As such, interim ministers accompany parishes during a time of excitement and energy for renewal and also through a period of anxiety and loss.



Interim priests assist a parish and its people in increasing their awareness of themselves and expanding their sense of choice as they attract, choose and prepare for the arrival of a new clergy leader.



Because of the complex nature of all that the interim period is attempting to accomplish, the interim priest will need to assess what they believe are the most important things to focus on during the interim period and make choices about what they can address and accomplish during the interim period.



AN INTERIM PERIOD IS	AN INTERIM PERIOD IS NOT
A time of focused, reflection, activity and planning	A pause when nothing happens “until the new incumbent gets here”
A customized approach based on the general mood of the parish, the way in which the former incumbent left, the level of conflict in the parish, the amount of time since the last interim period, etc., etc.	A cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach
A time of fostering relationships among the interim priest and the parish and its people	A time of neglecting relationships in that the interim will not be in the parish “permanently”
A time of goal-setting for the interim period that are mutually owned by the interim priest and the leadership of the parish	A time of just going from one task the next in that the interim period is limited in time.
A time of increased communication via every means available (website, email, Facebook, bulletin, oral announcements) about goals for the interim period, where the parish is in reaching the goals, where the parish is in the interim and canonical process, etc. etc.	A time of assuming people will understand what is going on simply via monthly updates in the bulletin.
A time to increase the participation of more people in the parish to do things during the interim period	A time to keep the work of the parish in the hands of just a few or in the hands of just those elected to specific positions
A time of paying attention to the quality and excellence of Sunday morning so that people continue to be attracted to the parish	A time of putting aside the question of the quality of Sunday morning on account of the parish being in an interim period.
A time of noticing if some <i>critical</i> areas (practices and policies) are in need of revision and moving forward	A time of trying to “fix” everything or ignoring some obvious areas that need attention.
A time of helping the parish and its people converse about who they have been, who they are now, what they want for themselves in the future and the kind of partner they seek in their next incumbent	A time of dusting off the information generated “the last time around” and assuming it will fit this time.
A time of honouring and retaining the parish’s character of worship, strengthening it (if need be in order to better “fit” with diocesan practices) in gentle ways and teaching people why the changes are necessary.	A time of changing the liturgy to reflect the liturgical preferences of the interim

Roles in the Interim Process

Interim Priest-in-Charge: The Interim Priest-in-Charge leads the parish in all aspects of its life during the interim period and oversees and facilitates the specific tasks related to the interim period. The Interim Priest-in-Charge does NOT oversee the work of the Canonical Committee.

Churchwardens: The Churchwardens function as they would normally and support the Interim-Priest-in-Charge and others in the tasks specific to the interim time, with special attention to

- a) forming the specific goals for the interim
- b) participating in and supporting data-gathering related to the parish's reflection on itself (where it is, where it has been, what it is going) in preparation for the writing of the profile
- c) involving an expanded group of people in tasks during the interim time
- d) communicating to the parish throughout the interim about progress on goals as well as how far along the parish is in its interim period
- e) participating as members of the canonical committee in recommending an applicant to the Bishop to be appointed the interim Priest-in-Charge and recommending an applicant to the Bishop be appointed as the new incumbent.

Parish Council: Function as they would normally and support the Interim Priest-in-Charge and the Churchwardens in tasks specific to the interim time.

Canonical Committee: Composed of the Churchwardens, Synod Delegates and Alternates and Youth Delegates and Alternates. The Committee interviews and applicants for the interim priest-in-charge and to recommends one applicant to the bishop for appointment. The Canonical Committee creates the parish profile, drawing on the self-reflection and learning done in the parish and submits it for comments and final edits to the Archbishop and the Executive Archdeacon. After working with the Bishop's Advisory Committee on Appointments on a shortlist of applicants, the Canonical Committee interviews and recommends an applicant to the Archbishop for appointment as the new incumbent.

Regional Archdeacon: The Regional Archdeacon briefs the Church Wardens, the Church Committee and others about the interim period and gives them any materials they need to assist them during this time. The Archdeacon checks in periodically with the Interim Priest-in-Charge and the Churchwardens during the Interim Period. Along with the Archbishop, the Executive Archdeacon and the Interim Priest-in-Charge, the Archdeacon agrees to the Canonical Committee beginning its work and briefs the

Committee on its tasks, providing samples of parish profiles. The Archdeacon reviews and gives comments to the Canonical Committee on the parish profile as it is being created. Along with the representatives of the Canonical Committee, the Archdeacon meets with the Bishop's Advisory Committee on Appointments (BACA) to review applications and to participate in the formation of a short list of applicants for the Canonical Committee to interview. The Archdeacon presents the short list of applicants to the full Canonical Committee and briefs them on the interview process.

BACA: Made up of the Archbishop, the Executive Archdeacon and clergy and lay people elected at Synod. With the Regional Archdeacon and representatives from the Canonical Committee, BACA reviews applications and assists the representatives from the Canonical Committee and the Archbishop to agree on a shortlist of applicants to be interviewed by the parish's full Canonical Committee.

Parish Members: Parish members are to be engaged as fully as possible in the ongoing tasks and ministry of the parish during the interim period, especially as new opportunities for involvement may become available. Parish members participate in parish's self-reflection that leads to the formation of the parish profile.

Executive Archdeacon: The Executive Archdeacon oversees and troubleshoots the interim process in the parishes of the Diocese. He or she posts notices of interim positions open, receives resumes and forwards these to canonical committee representatives for review before BACA meetings. He or she leads the process for letters of agreement between Interim Priest-in-Charge, the ChurchWardens and the Bishop's Office. He or she convenes the Interim Practitioners Group, a group of Interim Priests-in-Charge who meet to support each other in their work. The Executive Archdeacon provides guidance to Regional Archdeacons as they interact with parishes that are in an interim period. With the Archbishop, the Regional Archdeacon and the Interim Priest-in-Charge, the Executive Archdeacon gives permission for the Canonical Committee to begin its work and provides feedback on parish profiles. He or she posts parish vacancies and profiles, and receives applications and schedules BACA meeting. After the Archbishop appoints a new incumbent, the Executive Archdeacon leads the process of finalizing a letter of agreement between the new incumbent, the parish (via the Church Wardens) and the Archbishop's Office. Finally the Executive Archdeacon advises the parish and new incumbents on immigration issues and works with the parish and the new incumbent on the induction liturgy.

Archbishop: The Archbishop chairs BACA. In consultation with the parish, the Archbishop appoints the Interim Priest-in-Charge and appoints the new incumbent. The Archbishop works with the Executive Archdeacon, the Regional Archdeacon and the Synod Office Staff to support parishes during the interim period.

The Missioner for Congregational Development: The Missioner (in consultation with the Director of Mission and Ministry Development) works with the Interim Priest-in-Charge, the Regional Archdeacon and parish leadership on the design and facilitation of parish data-gathering and self-reflection sessions during the interim period.

Sample Timeline for Interim Ministry Period and the Work of the Canonical Committee (each Interim Ministry Period is different!)

Before the Interim Minister Begins

With the assistance of the Regional Archdeacon, the leadership of the parish and the retiring/resigning incumbent parish leadership sorts through any details related to the incumbent's departure: exit interview with wardens, returning keys, clarifying the cessation of all pastoral relationships, etc.

Parish leaders organize a way to say goodbye to the incumbent who is leaving: hosting a party, organizing any appropriate farewell gifts, making sure that the incumbent's last Sunday is a positive step in the transition process.

The Parish Canonical Committee works with the Executive Archdeacon to post a notice soliciting resumes for the role of Interim Priest-in-Charge.

The Regional Archdeacon meets with the Parish Council and shares the Interim Ministry Handbook and answers any questions about the Interim period.

The Canonical Committee interviews applicants for and recommends a priest to be appointed Interim Priest-in-Charge for the Parish.

Wardens, Bishop and the Interim Priest-in-Charge all sign a Letter of Agreement for the Interim Priest-in-Charge

Parish leaders announce who the Interim Priest-in-Charge will be and when the Interim Priest-in-Charge will begin work at the parish.

Once the Interim Priest-in-Charge Begins

Months 1-2: The Interim Priest-in-Charge, parish leaders and the people of the parish spend time getting to know each other and nurturing their relationships with one another

The Interim Priest-in-Charge and parish leadership clarify the role of interim, the interim process and timeline with parish as a whole

The Interim Priest-in-Charge and parish leadership come up with basic goals for the interim process, a communication plan for the interim period and ways to increase participation of a broader group in the parish in what needs to be done during the interim period,

The Interim Priest-in-Charge and parish leadership begins implementing communication plan and invites a broader group of people to take on needed roles during the interim period

Working with others, the Interim Priest-in-Charge comes up with a basic data-gathering plan in the parish to feed into the canonical process, drawing on diocesan consultation/facilitation as needed

Months 2-4: The Interim Priest-in-Charge and parish leaders begin the data gathering process with the assistance of others

The Interim Priest-in-Charge, working with others, begins any modest efforts to strengthen Sunday morning excellence

All parties continue to nurture their relationships and strengthen broader participation in the parish

Interim Priest-in-Charge and parish leadership continues to implement communication plan

Months 4-6 Interim Priest-in-Charge and parish leadership checks in on goals for the interim period

Interim Priest-in-Charge with the help of others wraps up data gathering

Interim Priest-in-Charge and parish leadership continue to implement communication plan

All parties continue to nurture relationships and broader participation in the parish

Interim Priest-in-Charge with the help of others continues to attend to Sunday morning excellence

Parish leadership and Interim Priest-in-Charge check in with Regional Archdeacon: Is it time to convene the Canonical Committee? With agreement of Interim Priest-in-Charge, Regional Archdeacon, Executive Archdeacon and Archbishop, Canonical Committee begins its work

Months 7-9 Begin Canonical process and creating Parish Profile: Canonical Committee meets with Regional Archdeacon, reviews the role and expectations of the Canonical Committee, and receives samples of profiles

Canonical Committee creates Parish Profile, getting the input of any in the parish and of the Regional Archdeacon

Canonical Committee forwards the draft profile to the Executive Archdeacon and the Archbishop for review

Canonical Committee, Executive Archdeacon and Archbishop meet by phone to discuss comments on profile

Canonical Committee revises Parish Profile and forwards to Executive Archdeacon and Archbishop for final approval and posting on Diocesan and General Synod website(s)

Months 9-12 Profile posted (typically) for 6 weeks

Bishop's Advisory Committee and Canonical Committee representatives review applications for 1-2 weeks and then meet to shortlist applicants

Regional Archdeacon meets with all members of the Canonical Committee and presents copies of the shortlisted applications and answers questions about the interview process

Canonical Committee interviews candidates – if any applicant is from a long distance they may be interviewed by Skype/Facetime – if they are then all applicants local or at a distance are interviewed in the same manner

Interviews are held (usually 2+ rounds) over a three-week period

Canonical Committee recommends an appointment to the Archbishop

Letter of Agreement (LOA) is worked out between parish, Archbishop's Office and new incumbent over a 2 week period

Signed Letter of Agreement signals public announcement of new incumbent

Months 12-15 Parish prepares for arrival of new incumbent during 3-month notice period new incumbent typically needs to give their current parish.

Months 15+ Parish welcomes new incumbent through hospitality, assistance where needed in new city and neighbourhood, induction liturgy etc.

Note: It is important when preparing a parish budget that both the cost of interviewing and moving the new priest are included

Questions to be Explored, Responded to and Articulated during the Interim Period

The following are some basic questions that need exploring during the interim period in preparation for writing the profile and as a way to prepare the parish to receive its next incumbent in a healthy and engaged way.

1. What do the parish and the parish's leaders most value/appreciate about the parish? Building on this, how would you describe the parish's identity—what does it uniquely offer its members, prospective members and the community/region in which it's located? Include in this who actually makes up the parish (demographics, life circumstances, cultural and spiritual backgrounds etc.)
2. What are the challenges that the parish faces and what is an approach to meet these challenges?
3. What sense do parish leaders or the parish make of any difficult or troubling events/happenings/patterns in the parish? What insights have been gleaned from engaging those areas of the parish's story that are difficult to talk about but may have a lingering effect on the parish, its people and its choices?
4. What are the limited number of goals that the parish desires to pursue over the next 2-3 years? These goals should have *both* to do with the ministry of the parish in its neighbourhood/regionally or globally *and* the ways in which the parish will nurture its people in the Christian faith and life. What needs to be continued, let go of, built upon, improved or initiated in the next 2-3 years? *If the parish has membership (numerical) growth as a goal, this needs to be said directly.*
5. What are the qualities and experience that the parish desires in its next incumbent that will assist the parish in meeting the above goals? Who is the clergy leader and partner that parish is seeking?

A Profile Checklist

Does your profile contain?

___ Pictures of people showing who the parish is and what the parish does (permissions must be given by all who are in the photos especially children shown in photos)

___ Pictures of any iconic artwork, physical structures or appurtenances that are at the heart of how the parish understands its life

___ Captions for each picture that reference what is in the picture and, in some cases, the meaning of the picture

___ Quotes from parishioners (and potentially others) about the parish, its people and its programs

___ Write-ups of the learning from the questions above (parish identity—who the parish is and who makes up the parish, the parish’s challenges, the parish’s goals, what the parish is seeking in its next incumbent)

___ Descriptions of the liturgies, the programs, the community life and other important dimensions of the parish

___ A clear statement of whether the appointment is full time or part time and, if part time, what percentage of time

___ Attendance and giving trends

___ Any information about rectory and/or housing for the new incumbent

___ Information about the community/neighbourhood/diocese and, if possible, how this might be connected to the parish’s current and future plans

___ Parish financials (in an appendix to the profile): operating budget information (past, current and projected), balances of any funds that parish holds

___ The history of the parish (in an appendix to the profile): a brief account with special attention to any dimensions of that history and identity that are important to the present and/or the future.

___ A unifying graphic and design approach that visually unifies the profile and gives it a polished and professional look