

# TRANSITION TIMES

## A QUARTERLY OF THE INTERIM MINISTRY CONFERENCE

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Editor, Anne Schroeder

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### THE JOINING PHASE: OFF TO A GOOD START By Peter Alexander

The Joining Phase is about new beginnings: “Every beginning is an end; every end is a beginning.” When the beginning is good, the rest follows more clearly and smoothly. The process tasks of “Joining the System” include pre-entry, the installation, and connecting.

*Continued from Volume 2, Issue 1—January, 2018*



#### The Installation

A liturgical installation on par with that for a “settled” pastor should not be expected, but an Intentional Interim installation should be formal (even on a Sunday morning) for several reasons. A formal installation:

- Marks the beginning of an intentional ministry period;
- Gives notice to the entire parish that a new chapter of ministry is beginning;
- Creates a sense of lift-off that can be “owned” by congregation and judicatory;
- Recognizes the Divine Call to this temporary situation;
- Speaks to the shared purpose the interim will serve with guest preacher and judicatory visitors;
- Provides for a “first sermon” if that should align; and
- Raises the profile of this ministry with the community and sister churches.

As Jesus marked the beginning of his ministry both with ritual and message, so we do well to draw attention to our intentional and specific purposes.

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#### Connecting

Sermons that are personable and reflect a sincere sense of pastoral care (based on a perceived motivation from the Gospel) are the familiar touchstones parishioners will utilize to see you as caring and “there for them.” In addition, some programmatic devices are useful to open up the system better for a new, temporary shepherd: surveys, listening posts, news articles, social media feed, cottage meetings, and home visits for school parents. These devices are often used by the joining Intentional Interim pastor to better listen and invite conversation. Other ways to break the ice with members about real-life issues are playing the board game, “Life Stories,” attending social events, or hosting them. Special care should be directed to the elected ministry leaders to connect beyond ministry tasks on a personal and family level. Their response to the personable nature of the Intentional Interim pastor will weigh into the rest of the congregation.

As Jesus began His public ministry with the end already in mind, the Intentional Interim pastor connects with the congregation to prepare them for the next beginning.

*Pastor Alexander is an interim practitioner, trainer and encourager of interim pastors and districts. He serves on the Interim Ministry Conference Board of Directors and as NALIP Dean of Faculty.*



# PRACTITIONERS TOOLBOX

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## SHARING OUR STORY: HISTORY/ HERITAGE

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Prepared by Harold Linn

**Objectives:** to have a non-threatening conversation, express loss, ease emotional tension, help the Interim join the system, help people appreciate different perspectives, and see God's grace in adversity.

**Audience:** Involve as much of the congregation as possible (especially leaders). Each congregation has its own structure and traditions which can be used (e.g. Bible classes, meetings, retreats, meals). You may suggest a new way if they are open to it. For large groups (over 10-12) devise a plan to break into smaller groups for processing.

**Session or Sessions:** Time needed - *at least* 1 ½ hours. Schedule more than one session to give everyone a chance to attend. I use the same visual at all sessions.

**Materials:** Use a timeline as a visual that can be seen by all; 12-15 feet in length depending on wall space. (In one congregation there was no wall space. We spread out the timeline on two tables and when appropriate held it up for people to see.) A simple source of paper is a butcher shop.

Mark the timeline by decades with significant events of the congregation on the top and pastoral leadership on the bottom. Leave plenty of space for additional information that will come through the process. I would recommend that a small committee initially prepare the timeline.

**Introduction:** Use a brief devotion to begin (suggestion Luke 24:13ff). Then briefly note that this is not an exact history. It is perceived history. There will be some emotional reaction. Each person is to be valued. No blame or credit is being established. Suggested time - 5-10 minutes.

1. Examine the prepared timeline. Let people react. For most people, they will see the congregation in this manner for the first time. 5 minutes.

2. Invite everyone forward to write their name on the timeline where they came into the congregation. Process as a group, noting observations people have. 5-10 minutes.

3. **Common losses (plenary):** Ask if there have been deaths felt by most of the congregation. Place a cross at the appropriate date. Allow for discussion. 5-10 mins.

4. **Individual losses (plenary):** Say something like, "we've looked at losses we shared as a community. Not all losses are by death nor are they all held in common. Now I want

you to mark personal losses experienced in the context of the congregation. Put crosses in as many places as you choose (deaths, goodbyes, divorce, etc.)." 10-15 mins.

5. **Resurrection** - Explain: "A cross was chosen because it was the means of our salvation. Our salvation was not complete until Jesus' resurrection. Now let us choose a symbol of the resurrection and place it where your personal loss began to spring forth with new life in Christ. For some that has not become clear yet. Just mark those places where hope is shining through." 5 mins. Process in small groups. 15-20 minutes.

6. **Congregational atmosphere (plenary)** - State: "Life is a series of ups and downs (fair weather and foul). Congregations go through this also. Now we want to see our history from that prospective. We are not trying here to resolve it or establish blame or credit. We simply want to see God's grace working. Together let's mark places where the congregation struggled." Place a cloud on adverse times and a sunburst on good times. 10 mins. Process as a group. 10 mins.

**General notes:** Let as much insight come from the congregation as possible. The time factors are flexible.

*Rev. Harold Linn, recipient of the Buggenhagen Award for excellent service in our Lord's Kingdom as an intentional interim pastor, Louisville, Ky. Before retirement, Harold served as coordinator of the Indiana District,*

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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NALIP Basic Education Phase 3, April 16-20, 2018.

Interim Ministry Conference (IMC) board meeting, April 19, 2018, St. Louis, MO.

NALIP 2018 Annual Conference, June 21-22, The Sheraton Chalet Hotel, Westport Plaza, St., Louis, MO.

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## NEWS

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### Clearinghouse

The Clearinghouse has moved from a Dropbox cloud location on a spreadsheet to its new and permanent home within the IMC website. The IMC hopes all trained interim practitioners will register their whereabouts, mobility, availability and experience. District Presidents and their support staff will be able to access this database for those who are available. Those who are trained but not available for placement are still asked to register to assist the census.