

Effectiveness of Interim Pastors

A Survey of Presbytery Executives

Appendix A (Web survey)

Number of e-mail invitations sent.....	169
Number of surveys completed	93
Response rate	55%

Q-1. To what extent do you think it is beneficial for a congregation to call an interim pastor in each of the following pastoral transition situations?

	Always Beneficial	Sometimes Beneficial	Rarely Beneficial	Never Beneficial	Not Sure	
a. When a pastor dies unexpectedly	65%	31%	1%	—	3%	
b. When the senior pastor of a multi-staff congregation leaves.....	66%	31%	3%	—	—	
c. When a pastor leaves under duress.....	74%	26%	—	—	—	
d. When a pastor who served the church for many years retires (see below).....	68%	30%	2%	—	—	
e. When a pastor who served the church for many years accepts another call (see below)	58%	40%	2%	—	—	
f. When a congregation is experiencing significant conflict	70%	25%	4%	—	—	
g. When a congregation needs to or wants to re-examine its mission	36%	54%	4%	2%	3%	
h. Whenever there is a pastoral vacancy	18%	69%	11%	—	2%	
i. Other _____	20%	—	40%	—	40%	+

If you answered “always” or “sometimes beneficial” to **Q-1d** above:

After the previous pastor has served how many years is an interim pastor beneficial? _____ years

		n=89
None	2%	
1	16%	
2	16%	
3 – 5	15%	
6 – 9	15%	
10	24%	
11 – 15	10%	
16 or more	2%	

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding

— = zero (0.0); no cases in this category

n = number of respondents eligible to answer this question

+ = nonresponses of 10% or more on this question (reported percentages for all questions omit nonresponses)

◆ = percentages add to more than 100 because respondents could make more than one response

Q-1. To what extent do you think it is beneficial for a congregation to call an interim pastor in each of the following pastoral transition situations?
(Cont.)

If you answered “always” or “sometimes beneficial” to *Q-1e* above:

After the previous pastor has served how many years is an interim pastor beneficial? _____ years

n=89

None	2%
1	18%
2	15%
3 – 5	13%
6 – 9	20%
10	20%
11 – 15	9%
16 or more	2%

Q-2. Below are statements that you may or may not have heard concerning interim pastors. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
a. Interim pastors improve the chances that the next pastor will have a harmonious stay.	22%	42%	33%	3%	—	—
b. Unless it is a troubled congregation, interim pastors only drag out the search process.	—	6%	19%	48%	26%	1%
c. Interim pastors help congregations understand who they are.	19%	46%	32%	2%	—	1%
d. Unless it is a troubled congregation, having an interim pastor weakens a congregation because congregational membership drops.	—	2%	9%	57%	30%	1%
e. Interim pastors are helpful in preparing a congregation to accept change that inevitably comes with a new pastor.	28%	42%	25%	4%	—	1%
f. Interim pastors too often alienate members for no apparent reason.	—	4%	15%	49%	28%	3%
g. Interim pastors help strengthen the connectionalism between the congregation and the larger church.	11%	43%	38%	6%	—	2%
h. Interim pastors help congregations see their potential.	9%	51%	35%	3%	—	2%
i. Interim pastors tend to be pastors who have not been successful in the parish.	1%	2%	24%	51%	19%	3%
j. Interim pastors are needed to break self-destructive patterns of congregational leadership.	10%	53%	28%	8%	1%	—
k. Interim pastors provide stability during pastoral transitions.	24%	56%	18%	1%	—	1%
l. Interim pastors help congregations value their past before moving forward.	12%	49%	27%	9%	—	2%
m. Interim pastors help congregations let go of the past so they can move forward.	15%	41%	35%	9%	—	—
n. Congregational membership usually drops during an interim period.	—	8%	35%	42%	8%	7%

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Q-2. Below are statements that you may or may not have heard concerning interim pastors. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
o. Interim pastors help congregations deal with the grieving process when a beloved pastor leaves.	18%	58%	23%	1%	—	—
p. Healthy congregations usually do not need an interim pastor.	24%	48%	25%	3%	—	—
q. It requires a special type of person to be effective in interim ministry.	1%	8%	23%	60%	7%	1%
r. It requires many years of experience in ministry to be effective in interim ministry.	53%	39%	6%	1%	1%	—
s. It requires specialized training to be effective in interim ministry.	12%	28%	40%	17%	1%	1%
t. Interim pastors help to empower the congregation's laity.	43%	27%	25%	4%	—	—
u. Interim pastors help congregations prepare for the next pastor.	10%	48%	29%	6%	—	7%

Q-3. When helping a congregation find an interim pastor, do you prefer . . .

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
a. Interim pastors with education/training in interim ministry.	55%	39%	4%	1%	—
b. Interim pastors who are newly ordained.	—	—	16%	53%	31%
c. Interim pastors who are retired ministers.	—	8%	82%	9%	1%
d. Interim pastors with experience serving as interim pastors.	21%	67%	10%	1%	—
e. Anyone available in the presbytery.	—	2%	16%	53%	28%

Q-4. Is there anything else you look for in an interim pastor? If so, please indicate what you look for in the space below.

[Tabulated separately]

Q-5. If a pastor has just experienced a difficult call, do you recommend that he or she serve in an interim position before seeking a new call?

Yes, always.	—
Yes, usually.	—
Sometimes yes; sometimes no.	27%
No, usually not.	61%
No, never.	11%

Q-6. For how many years have you served as presbytery executive/general presbyter in this or any other presbytery?

Years	
Less than 3.	22%
3 – 5.	28%
6 – 10.	36%
11 – 15.	9%
More than 15.	6%

Q-7. Please feel free to add any comments you think would help us understand when interim pastors are most effective.

[Tabulated separately]

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