

Together, your District Executive and the UUA Transitions (formerly Settlement) Office provide counsel and resources to congregations facing or planning for changes in their professional ministry.

The Transitions Office recommends interim ministers to guide the congregation through the transition, and manages the on-line Ministerial Settlement System by which congregations publicize open positions in ministry, and by which ministers indicate interest in them. Through a Ministerial Settlement Representative in each district, the Office offers counsel and support to ministerial search committees and provides confidential information about prospective candidates.

The Transitions website provides up-to-date resources for carrying out a successful search for a new minister. The Transitions Director offers an annual Luncheon for Ministerial Search Committees at UUA General Assembly.



“The Interim Opportunity”
is produced by
the Rev. Heather Lynn Hanson, AIM, and is
funded in part by the
Fund for Unitarian Universalism

If you have questions . . .

**please contact the
Transitions Office or your
District Executive**



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The Interim Opportunity

A Planning Guide
to accompany
“The Interim Opportunity,”
a DVD produced for the
Transitions Office of the
Unitarian Universalist Association

by the Rev. John H. Weston
Transitions Director

Congratulations! – and what’s next?

Once you have decided to hire an interim minister to work with you during the time to come, you will likely ask yourselves, what do we do next? What do we do before the interim minister arrives, and how do we make best use of the interim minister once he or she is here?

The Opportunity Ahead

Recall the reasons you decided to hire an interim minister in the first place. If your previous called minister was a good fit, likely you were concerned about the congregation’s ability to accept a successor. If your previous called minister’s service ended in disappointment, disillusionment, or conflict, likely you felt that the congregation still had issues to work through, and organizational work to do. Whatever the circumstances, and often they are a mixture of “all of the above,” you were aware that a congregation in transition calls for a transitional ministry.

Hold onto those reasons! As you plan the time to come with your interim minister, keep them in mind. Don’t allow the interim ministry to become a merely temporary ministry, a “hold-the-fort” ministry, or a mini-called ministry, and the interim minister a “minister temp.” Take advantage of the opportunity ahead.

Developmental Tasks in the Interim

A congregation that successfully addresses five important developmental tasks during the interim between called ministers is very

likely to have a vibrant called ministry thereafter. The first step in planning is self-assessment. Hold a meeting of your leadership, perhaps even of the entire congregation, to assess the relative importance of the issues below. Indicate three or fewer first-order priorities and as many second-and third-order priorities as you wish. Keep a copy of the completed profile to form the basis for later planning and evaluation.

1• 2• 3•

Claim and honor your past and heal your griefs and conflicts

With your interim minister’s assistance, plan to study who you have been and what you have done, and to acknowledge your differences and conflicts.

1• 2• 3•

Come to terms with your unique identity, your strengths, your needs, your challenges

With your interim minister’s assistance, plan to describe yourselves to yourselves fully and fairly. In describing what you are good at and where you need help, you will get clues about preferred qualities in your next called minister.

1• 2• 3•

Clarify the multiple dimensions of your leadership, both ordained and lay, and navigate the shifts in leadership that accompany times of transition

With your interim minister’s assistance, plan to evaluate the effectiveness of your organizational structure, the ways in which

you fill lay leadership positions, and the relationship between ordained and lay leadership.

1• 2• 3•

Renew connections with available resources, within and beyond the UUA

With your interim minister’s assistance, plan to seek out curricula, counsel, and other resources that will strengthen your congregation now and in the future.

1• 2• 3•

Renew your vision, strengthen your stewardship, prepare for new professional leadership, and engage your future with anticipation and zest.

With your interim minister’s assistance, plan to discern your common understanding of your future and to strengthen your care of each other and of your religious community, so that you head into your search for a called minister with a “can do” commitment.

Keep Your Interim Status in Focus

As time passes, priorities change. Revisit this exercise every calendar quarter or so to make sure that your energies and those of your interim minister are being applied where they are most needed. You have only a short time to accomplish these developmental tasks. Make the most of it!

If at any time you have questions about interim ministry, please contact me at the Transitions Office!

¾ John Weston