**What Is An Interim Time In A Congregation?**

By: Terry Foland

Congregations have times after a pastor has left, for whatever reason, before they have been able to engage a new minister for a new call agreement. In the church today we call this an interim time. Interim by dictionary definition means "temporary" or "provisional". It may also mean "the intervening time". When the Interim Ministry Network was early in its founding we often used the phrase "The In Between Time".

The word intentional was then added to the term to give us the phrase, "Intentional Interim Minister" to describe the pastor/minister who serves in a congregation in the period between the "no longer and the not yet." One minister is gone and the next one is not yet called. Intentional is used to define that the interim minister is intentionally not a candidate for the long term or installed pastor. Through experience we have learned that once an interim minister decides he/she wants to stay in a church for the long term, they are no longer able to be help the congregation confront and address the issues necessary prior to calling the next pastor. They will not want to offend any of the people who are responsible for securing the next pastor. When a congregation decides it wants to "keep" the interim, they have cut off the possibility of working on what may strengthen the congregation and the field of candidates to consider for their next chapter of ministry and mission.

Intentional also means the Interim Minister makes clear to the governing body of the congregation they are there to help bridge the time between called pastors only. An intentional interim minister does the usual duties of a minister {leading worship, administration, pastoral care, etc.} but their main goal is to help prepare the congregation to be as strong as possible when they do move to calling the next minister.

So, an interim ministry time is a very important time in the life of a congregation. Resolve issues, determine a vision for the next chapter of its life and get its house in order for working together with a new minister/pastor for a new future.