

Interim Ministry Basics

Syllabus

Spring, 2026

DISCIPLES INTERIMS

INTERIM MINISTRY BASICS



The Interim Ministry Basics training, offered by Disciples Interims, helps students develop a foundational understanding of interim ministry.

It equips participants with the basic concepts and resources necessary to lead congregations through transitional periods, including their search for their next settled pastor, with wisdom, empathy, and vision.

Participants will develop the self-awareness and essential skills necessary to guide communities in addressing grief, conflict, and systemic change, while fostering resilience and renewed purpose. They will begin building a community necessary to nurture and sustain them in this work.

This training enables participants to deepen their understanding of congregational dynamics, pastoral leadership, and spiritual discernment to better assist congregations in clarifying their identity, mission, and vision for the future.

Students will prepare and turn in a Course Project that synthesizes the concepts and the practices they have learned into a leadership action plan for their selected ministry site. Those who complete the training will be prepared to empower congregations to embrace transformation as an opportunity for growth, while ensuring stability and vitality as they move forward in faith.

Interim Ministry Basics
Course Outline
Spring, 2026



Students are asked to buy their own copy of Norm Bendroth's book - "Interim Ministry in Action: A Handbook for Churches in Transition"

Before the training begins, a link for a tutorial covering the Learning Platform will be sent. Please complete the tutorial prior to Session 0.

Sunday, April 12 – Session 0. Orientation Session, introductions to one other, to the faculty, to the course design, the syllabus, to the course project and to the learning platform, Disciples Leadership Network. This session will last about an hour. All class sessions are offered via Zoom.

Mondays:

April 13 – Session 1. Overview of Intentional Interim Ministry

- Sharing experiences of Interim Ministry
- Defining the purpose and pluses of intentional Interim Ministry, as contrasted to “fill-in” ministry, the importance of “liminal space”
- Clarifying between "Interim" and "Transitional" ministry
- Introducing the “Three Big Questions”
- Describing the role and the importance of the Transition Team
- Exploring the idea that as Interim/Transitional ministers we are doing more these days because congregations are dealing with a variety of transitions, more than just a time between settled pastors.

April 20 – Session 2. The Five Focus Points

- What does this look like in your setting?
- Presenting theory and practice
- Understanding how The Focus Points overlap and aren't necessarily sequential.
- Building toward a course project -- what will happen in your congregation? What will you teach the church's leaders about interim ministry?

(continued)

April 27 – Session 3. The Church, the Changes in Culture, and Our Response

- Discussing the Purpose and Mission of the Church – how is this the same and different in today's context?
- What characterizes our Post Pandemic church? What will we do?
- How does post modernism shape ministry today?
- Investigating the gap between culture and the church and how it is increasing.
- Exploring Socio/Political realities - how does the church find its place?
- How does all this affect a congregation during the time between pastors?

May 4 – Session 4. Spirituality, Collective Discernment, and Visioning

- Connecting to God, Christ, Spirit, Abiding – disciplines and practices for both leaders and congregations
- Committing to self-care for the minister and the congregation
- Exploring methods of group spiritual discernment for Congregational Visioning – Appreciative Inquiry as one important resource.

May 11 – Session 5. Family Systems Theory Lived Out in Transitions

- Developing self-awareness and self-differentiation for healthier leadership as interim pastors (and for laity)
- Navigating the system of the congregation – anxiety, triangles, leadership
- Understanding Family Systems Theory and change

May 18 – Session 6. Understanding and Navigating Change

- Understanding different types of change - "technical" versus "adaptive" versus "hybrid"
- Navigating change in relation to the Five Focus Points
- Leading in the midst of change – recognizing loss, grief, healing, and resistance, while promoting resilience, agility, and joy. Listening, letting go and moving on.

We will not meet on Monday May 25 - Memorial Day Holiday

June 1 – Session 7. Conflict Transformation

- Identifying current conflicts
- Preparing for times of conflict - behavioral covenants, learning our own styles of dealing with conflict, getting help
- Coming to terms with unresolved past grievances and conflicts
- Learning methods for promoting healing and going forward with unburdened excitement

June 8 – Session 8. Plotting the Course of Ministry Transitions

- Students will meet in breakout groups to present a synopsis of their course project
- How will you synthesize the concepts shared during the course to create a plan for your context? What will you teach your church leaders about transitions in the life of the church?
- Reviewing the tools and resources shared during the course - how do they work together?
- Exploring resources, sharing resources and continuing to learn

The Course Project is an exercise in synthesis and integration that results in a transitional leadership action plan. It should weave together the content, tools, and personal insights gained through the Interim Ministry Basics journey. In line with the course objectives, the Course Project is designed to help students reflect upon each of the Basics of Interim Ministry and how these will shape leadership doing the work of transitions in ministry, plus how these enrich pastoral identity, whether in intentional interim ministry or discerning how these principles apply to an ongoing call in another ministry context.

Project Objective - more specifically, students will reflect upon each of the Interim Basics that we introduce during the eight sessions and describe how to use them in a specific ministry setting.

For more information and to request a link to the course application, email us at Interims@dhm.disciples.org