

# AN INTERIM JOURNEY

## Mission Renewal during a Pastoral Transition

### Overview of Resources and Steps

*Deciding our church's leadership needs is our response to God's calling us to take part in God's mission.*

Everything we do as a congregation relates in some way to God's calling and sending of the church to take part in God's mission. We once thought of the church as the calling and sending agency – we called pastors and we sent missionaries. Perhaps the greatest opportunity we have now, during a pastoral interim period, is to discover or reaffirm that God is calling and sending *the church* to take part in God's mission. What is God calling and sending the church – our church – to be and do? During our interim period, we can consider this question afresh, as we prepare to discern our leadership needs in response to God who calls and sends us to take part in God's mission.

#### ***Proposed Goals for the time of Interim:***

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What do we hope to accomplish during the time of interim? Discuss these general goals. Which ones excite your hopes for the interim period?

- Affirming our heritage – embracing the gifts God gives to our community of faith through our history and present ministry.
- Clarifying our congregation identity – naming and claiming what our church is called by God to be and do.

- Strengthening the leadership team – practices of prayer, analysis, and priority-setting.
- Preparing for the next pastor – clarifying the challenges and opportunities that lie before us and that with new leadership we will need to address.

### ***Some Benefits We Can Expect***

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We can imagine many blessings from this interim time of prayer, study and planning, including the following:

- Growing in faith together.
- Discern vision for our church's future ministry.
- More inclusivity in decision-making and the ministries of our church.
- Becoming an even more committed community of Christ-followers, open to God's call and leading.
- Develop greater unity.
- Have a clear sense of our leadership needs.
- Experiencing the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.

### ***Roles and Structures***

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The following structures are helpful to accomplish various tasks for fruitful formation and discernment in the interim period:

1. The leadership council – to give input to overall design, participate in all events including two dedicated meetings of the council, and to champion the congregation's broad participation.
2. A designated Task Force (often a helpful option) – to plan, communicate, and facilitate the activities.
3. The interim pastor
4. The Congregation – participate in a time of formation (listening, learning and faith sharing):
  - (a) All congregation conversation events
  - (b) Meetings of existing groups
  - (c) Small Bible study groups.

Center coaching includes:

- Initial consultation to design and integrate these resources with local needs and timeframe

- As needed, conference calls and follow up supports (for orienting and equipping in advance of each step)
- Availability throughout to interpret, advise, adapt
- Wrap-up consultation to evaluate, consider priorities, point to next steps

### ***An Interim Journey – key elements***

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- Step 1 – Congregation Heritage Celebration** for developing common ground and shared learning
- Step 2 – Leadership council** completes online survey and conducts council conversation to assess the now and identify key challenges and opportunities facing us.
- Step 3 – Congregation wide Bible study and formation process** to prepare hearts and minds open to the Spirit and to each other for visioning our future priorities in ministry.
- Step 4 – Congregation Vision Event** involving worship, conversation groups sharing hopes and dreams, and fellowship meal.
- Step 5 – Leadership council** meets to capture insights and energy, needs and challenges, and identify ministry priorities that assist in focusing ministry and aiding in the pastoral search.

### ***Timeline and Activities – a scenario to interact with***

#### **Month One**

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Meeting of Leadership Council and Interim Pastor to:

- Share hoped-for outcomes and benefits
- Walk through the steps, visualize a timeline
- Set date for Step One – the Heritage Celebration – and identify leadership and create communication plan.

Resources and Supports:

1. Process Overview and Timeline Scenario (this piece)
2. Overview of Heritage Celebration

Coaching support for designing the process: integrating into the unique culture, experience, and timeline needed. Responsive to questions, hopes and concerns.

## Month 2-5: The Mission Study Process

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### 1. HERITAGE CELEBRATION

Designed to engage the widest possible cross-section of the members of the church in learning from one another and helping each other to understand more clearly their past and present context for ministry. The purpose of a Heritage Celebration is to create a joint picture of your world, your values and commitments, and your collective past – which impact upon your present. This will help the church clarify the common ground upon which to build ministry for the future. General timeframe: 2 ½ hours (adaptable), including meal.

Resources and Supports:

- Detail facilitation guidelines for Heritage Celebration
- Event Feedback worksheet - handout

Coaching includes support for designing and preparing to facilitate the Heritage Celebration. Responsive to questions, hopes and concerns.

### 2. LEADERSHIP COUNCIL online survey and conversation to assess the now and identify key challenges and opportunities facing us.

- Council members complete 36 item online survey, “Listening to the Spirit: Assessing the Now.”
- A report is generated by the Center coach and sent to the leadership.
- Council conversation – a dedicated meeting to share, listen, and learn, embracing key opportunities and challenges facing us.
- Helpful key observations and questions are shared with congregation, inviting interaction and dialogue, expanding a shared picture of our current opportunities.

Resources and Supports:

Access to online survey “Listening to the Spirit: Assessing the Now”:

- LTS#1 – Overview of what the survey covers, instructions for completing the survey, and live link to the survey for participants
- LTS#2 – Design for leadership team conversation
- LTS#3 – Spiritual Practice of Gratitude and Thanksgiving

- LTS#4 – Detail facilitation steps for leading the leadership team conversation

Coaching support is responsive to facilitation questions, hopes, concerns.

3. **CONGREGATION WIDE BIBLE STUDY FORMATION PROCESS** – to prepare hearts and minds opening to the Spirit and to each other for imagining elements of God’s dream for our church

*A People of Salt and Light: Jesus Model for Community* – a four session formation process for all existing groups, study groups and classes, and ad hoc groups. Draws upon Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and through Jesus’ own words explores aspects of a biblical vision of community. Each session contains biblical study, reflection material, and an integrating exercise to name and claim insights together. .

Session 1: The Blessings of the Reign of God

Session 2: A Church Living for the World

Session 3: Jesus’ Vision of Right Relationships

Session 4: A Model for Praying and Acting

Resources and Supports:

1. Downloadable Bible study booklet with reprint rights
2. Small group facilitator’s guide

Coaching support for facilitating broad participation in Bible study. Responsive to questions, hopes and concerns.

4. **CONGREGATION VISION EVENT** – involving worship, conversation groups capturing shared hopes and dreams, and fellowship meal.

The Vision Event stimulates Christian hope and faithful imagination: building on the Bible study, engaging in dialogue and prayer to discern together elements of God’s vision for the church’s life and ministry.

Resources and Supports for Congregational Vision event:

- Sunday morning draft design of Vision Event
- Circle group Discussion process
- Sample announcement
- Logistics
- Hospitality Plans

Coaching support for designing and facilitating the event, responsive to questions, hopes, concerns.

5. **LEADERSHIP COUNCIL** meets to learn and discern from this mission study experience.

This leadership team conversation is for capturing insights and energy, needs and challenges along with elements of a shared vision. In this meeting ministry priorities are identified that will assist in the pastoral search.

Resources and Supports:

1. Facilitation process guidelines for this Leadership team discernment.
2. Handout – design for the meeting
3. Handout – Worksheet for participants

Coaching support for preparing to facilitate the leadership council conversation. Includes follow up conference call with leaders to claim learnings, priorities for ministry, and identifying next steps.