

## **Five tasks laid out in Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry By Roger Nicholson**

The transitional pastor and Session should, of course, prioritize these and some may not be necessary at all.

### 1. COMING TO TERMS WITH HISTORY.

Feelings, termination emotions, need to be resolved: loss, grief, anger, despair, relief, guilt, panic. Old and debilitating ways of responding to crises need to be addressed. The ghosts of pastors past need to be put to rest. A dearly loved immediate past pastor needs to be released in the minds and hearts of the congregation. If the past pastor was pressured to leave by some in the congregation, healing between for and against groups needs to occur. Where the church has come from and how it got there needs to be understood, acknowledged, valued and worked through, whatever is appropriate. Conflicts of long-standing need to be resolved. Until this happens, a congregation is less able to make good decisions about itself.

### 2. DISCOVERING A NEW IDENTITY.

Churches in the interim are no longer defined by their pasts. The pastor who defined them in many ways is no longer present with them. They will not stay the same. A new identity must develop. While the next permanent pastor will bring vision to the church, the congregation must discover what, in general terms, it wishes to become in the future.

### 3. FACILITATING SHIFTS OF POWER.

New leadership is necessary, since the "old" pastor may have been the key decision-maker and leader of the past life of the congregation or had failed to address less appropriate 'power brokers' among the membership. Some members fade from active service when the pastor departs. Others get involved. If the previous pastor was a great influence on the congregation, a bold or controversial leader, the more changes in leadership will occur. An interim pastor can help in leadership shifts making them positive and appropriate to the changing situation. The interim pastor may provide leadership training, giving the new pastor a cadre of people who know the when, how and where of church leadership.

### 4. RETHINKING DENOMINATIONAL TIES.

Part of a church's identity is its connection with the larger church. The staff, resources and organization of the PC(USA) will become clearer to a church in transition as it connects more with the denomination in its search process. The Confessions, Catechisms and the *Book of Order*, all of which help define us, should become more familiar to the church as it lives through the interim period. Contacts with the presbytery and General Assembly office will be made frequently by the Pastoral Search Committee and an appreciation for its work will be developed. An interim pastor can help a congregation understand its heritage and denominational structure.

### 5. BUILDING COMMITMENT TO NEW LEADERSHIP AND A NEW FUTURE.

The church must move from its past orientation to a future vision. Pastoral styles differ and strengths vary and the congregation must be open to the individuality of its next pastor. A congregation must be spiritually prepared for its new pastor. A commitment to the new pastor must be encouraged, especially when that person is identified and called. Shared vision and working relationships can and must develop among the congregation. The church must become forward-looking, appreciating the past but rolling up its sleeves to a new and exciting ministry in the upcoming days. The interim pastor can engage the congregation in this process.

## **From Presbytery of New Covenant Temporary Pastor Contract:**

The Temporary Pastor maybe responsible for providing pastoral duties as indicated in this position description:

1. Plan, lead, and preach in Sunday worship and in other services as appropriate. Arrange for pulpit supply and leadership of worship on Sunday's not present.

2. Provide pastoral care to the sick and homebound as time permits.
3. Officiate at weddings and funerals as requested.
4. Plan and moderate Session and congregational meetings.
5. Work with Session, committees and church organizations to assist them in carrying out their assigned work.
6. Train newly elected officers in conjunction with staff and selected members.
7. Perform other administrative duties as requested (i.e. assist in preparing bulletins, newsletters,etc.)
8. Supervise the various staff members with the Personnel Committee.
9. Exercise general oversight of church facilities through the Session.
10. Represent the congregation with Presbytery, church and community organizations.