

Questions You Might Have About Interim Pastor Ministries

1. Do we really need this process? After all, we are a healthy church!

After 33 years of the same lead pastor, McCoy is at a critical tipping point in its history. A set of unbiased, unclouded, impartial outside eyes to help the church take a deep, introspective look is recommended even for very healthy churches like McCoy. All churches have blind spots.

The trained and skilled interim pastor can help the church utilize this time to evaluate, refocus, solve problems, and prepare to call the next pastor.

Further, having an interim pastor means other leaders don't have to carry an increased load of ministry. As a result, when the permanent pastor arrives, the church leaders are energized to lock arms with their new pastor and jointly serve the church and the community.

2. Why not just form a search committee now?

- **The church needs to take time to grieve and let go of its spiritual, relational, and emotional ties to Pastor Ray.**

No one walks up to a widow at her husband's funeral and asks her if she is thinking about marrying again soon. The church needs a season to grieve, refresh, retool, and refocus. This season between pastors is a unique time to prepare the church for its future. Do your house cleaning. Settle issues. Discern God's future for the church—and then begin a pastoral search.

- **The church needs to take time to recognize and address any church health issues.**

In their eagerness to move forward, many churches ignore existing challenges and congregational needs. When a beloved pastor leaves, people need a season to grieve and prepare themselves for the next pastor. Even when a pastor does not have a rough departure, there may be division in the congregation. People may be at odds with one another, or other issues may be present. In such cases, there needs to be organizational and relational renewal.

Instead of tending to these issues, churches drag them into a new marriage with the next pastor. Under stress, these problems will surface again. They will create conflict and stifle the ministry. Unresolved issues cause frustration, paralysis, and, in all likelihood, a short tenure for the new pastor. Churches would be wise to use this time between pastors to address any issues as they prepare the church for its future.

- **The church needs to clarify its values or refocus its vision.**

Before it begins a pastoral search, the church must clarify its core values, refocus its God-given vision, and start living it.

Values go beyond a church's doctrinal belief. Values are what matters most to your church, what's important. Values motivate vision, the picture of what you believe God is calling your church to be and to do in the future.

If a church and a pastoral candidate have similar values and visions, there is a good chance they will work together in harmony. So, it is wise to take some time to clarify your values, seek God, and find His vision for the future.

3. Why not Pastor Christopher?

One of the first strategic objectives of the IP and the Board of Deacons will be to determine if Pastor Christopher is a candidate; Pastor Christopher will also be discerning if he senses God is calling him to the Senior Pastor position.

Pastor Christopher and his family desire to continue their ministry at McCoy and have no plans, desires, or intentions of leaving.

“Even through this process we (Pastor Christopher and his family) have felt the church’s great love and concern for us. We pray for many more years of ministry together. I am open to considering the Senior Pastoral position but ultimately want what is best for McCoy. I love my current role, but I am also open to other roles within McCoy’s ministry. I have been and will continue to be praying for God’s wisdom and guidance for me, my family, and McCoy” - Pastor Christopher

4. Why is an interim needed?

There is an excellent benefit in hiring an IP. He is a seasoned pastor – mature, experienced, wise, proven, skilled and trained to address transitional issues, including relational, leadership, staff, and other organizational challenges. The IP is also strategic. He follows a roadmap, a tried-and-true process to prepare the church for its future.

The interim will:

1. Connect with People: Building Relationships
2. Assess Church Health: Discovering Reality
3. Facilitate Action: Addressing Needs
4. Lead Strategic Planning: Discerning Direction
5. Coach the Pastor Search: Assisting the Search/Pulpit Committee

Beyond helping us address any issues, the intentional IP can help us clarify and refocus our values and vision so we can successfully call a pastor that fits our church.

Like our building programs with Church Growth Services, we believe McCoy has the potential to become stronger during this time of transition. IPM will help us regroup, renew spiritually, clarify our values, and refocus our vision. Then we will be in our best position to call a pastor best suited for our church, who, by God’s grace, will have a long and fruitful ministry.

5. How long will this process take?

It is likely the IP would be with us 12-14 months. This is not a process we want to rush following Pastor Ray’s 33-year-long ministry.

6. What does this mean for the ministries of the church?

The IP will largely perform everything that Pastor Ray is currently doing. This means we should see minimal disruption to ministries while the IP is at McCoy. This will also allow Pastor Christopher to continue his normal full-time ministry responsibilities.

7. Will I be able to participate in this process?

Yes, the entire church will have the opportunity to be interviewed by the IP, as well as participate in an online church health assessment tool. And of course, some will be asked to serve on the Transition Team and/or the Pastor Search Committee.

8. What is the doctrinal statement of IPM?

IPM's doctrinal statement can be found at: interimpastors.com/about/beliefs/

9. How are IPM pastors vetted?

All IPM pastors are at least 50 years old, have a minimum of 15 years proven effective ministry experience in a lead or solo pastoral position, and are skilled, seasoned, and strategic. All IPM pastors must have a minimum of an M.Div. or Th.M. degree, but many have doctorates. Each interim pastor is thoroughly vetted relative to IPM's standards and must pass a criminal background check and undergo a rigorous application process.

Further, IPM has an entire department dedicated to the ongoing refinement of their training curriculum, fostering effective interim coaching, holding annual continuing education events and making new resources available to prepare and sharpen their interim pastors.

10. Will we have a say in the interim?

Yes. The IP candidate will come to McCoy for a weekend so that the church can meet him and his wife, converse, ask questions and hear him preach. You'll also have a chance to review his resume'.

11. What will this cost?

Interim Salary – A contract is executed directly between the church and IPM. The contract is based on Pastor Ray's annual gross salary package. The amount of Pastor Ray's gross annual package will be divided by twelve and paid monthly to IPM. IPM handles the payroll and associated issues directly with the interim pastor (IP). The IP is a W-2 employee of IPM.

Interim Housing – The church will provide housing and pay utilities for the IP during his time at McCoy.

Interim Candidating – There will be a few expenses related to bringing the potential IP to McCoy for a candidating weekend (travel, hotel, food, etc.).

Interim Relocation – The church will cover the cost for the IP and his family to relocate to McCoy and then to return to their home when the interim is finished.

Coaching – There will be a \$100 monthly coaching fee. IPM provides a coach for the IP and the intentional process. The coach will serve alongside the IP the entire time the interim is at McCoy. This coaching relationship helps to ensure the most effective interim possible. This fee is based on church attendance and these funds provide a monthly stipend for the coach.

Church Health Assessment Tool – IPM uses a church health assessment tool that has a one-time fee of \$395.

*Much of the information for the above questions comes from the Interim Pastor Ministries website, the book *Soaring Between Pastors: 8 Actions to Thrive During a Pastoral Transition* by Tom Harris & George Bullard, and Todd Musser, IPM's Senior Director of Pastor and Church Engagement.

For more information, including videos, articles, and testimonials, please visit interimpastors.com. For an in-depth understanding of the IPM ministry and mission, order the book ***Soaring Between Pastors: 8 Actions to Thrive During a Pastoral Transition*** by Tom Harris & George Bullard.