

SAMPLE LETTER TO CONGREGATION ON INTERIM PASTOR

This is a sample letter to be sent to the congregation through the Session when a pastor's resignation is announced. It is signed by the COM liaison.

Dear Friends:

As you prepare to experience a major transition in the life of your congregation, we want you to know that the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of Long Island is ready to assist you in any way we can. I am your liaison and I will be working closely with your session to assess the needs of your congregation and help the session determine the type of interim leadership that will serve you best. As soon as your pastor leaves, the Committee on Ministry will recommend a moderator for your session for appointment by the Presbytery. If the session later selects an interim pastor, that person would normally then become the moderator.

The period of transition and change will be a time of growth and regrouping, a time of self-study, a time of reassessment and setting of new directions, or reaffirming past mission emphasis. It is the session's responsibility, working together with COM representatives, to invite a pastor to become the interim pastor for your congregation. A contract will be negotiated between that individual, the session, and the Committee on Ministry that will describe in specific terms what the interim pastor is expected to do. This contract will be reviewed by the Committee on Ministry together with the session and the interim pastor on a regular basis. Normally, the contract is for a twelve month period of time. The contract may be extended by agreement of the Session, interim pastor and the Committee on Ministry/Presbytery. It needs to be understood by the Committee on Ministry, the session, and the entire congregation, that the interim pastor will not be a candidate for the installed pastoral position of your church.

While this interim pastor is not called by the congregation or installed by the Presbytery, the tasks of ministry are basically the same as those to which you are accustomed. The major responsibility that an interim pastor has is to prepare your congregation for your future, permanently installed pastor. A trained interim pastor understands the issues and concerns that your congregation may have during this "in-between" time and has the pastoral skills to deal with them. Because the interim pastor cannot be a candidate for the permanent position, he or she can be relatively objective in assisting your congregation in your decision making. He or she will understand what this transition period is like and will be able to help persons deal with the feeling that often surround the ending of one pastorate and the beginning of another.

I look forward to an enriching and productive time of working together with you and your session as your congregation embarks on this next phase of its journey. This is an important and exciting time in the history of this congregation. Your prayers and faithfulness are part of the process. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me.

Committee on Ministry
June, 1997