

Classis Cascades

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## **HANDBOOK**

### **for**

## **SPECIALIZED INTERIM MINISTRY**

[Modified version of handbook created by Synod of the Great Lakes]

### **Introduction:**

Many congregations in the Reformed Church in America have benefited from the services of a Specialized Interim Minister (SIM) who has guided them through the transition between pastors. The aptitude, training and skills of the SIM have helped the congregation move forward on a defined agenda which has facilitated increased health, vitality and readiness to proceed into the next phase of ministry with new pastoral leadership.

This handbook is intended to assist congregations seeking a SIM, ministers considering becoming a SIM, and classis personnel charged with supervision of a church being served by a SIM. Included here you will find the following sections:

1. *POLICIES* governing Specialized Interim Ministry in the Classis of Cascades.
2. *FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENTS* from the *RCA Book of Church Order* which apply to Specialized Interim Ministry.
3. *STEPS FOR A CHURCH* to move through to consider and obtain the services of a Specialized Interim Minister and a Church Request Form.
4. *STEPS FOR A MINISTER* to move through to become a Specialized Interim Minister.
5. *A STANDARD CONTRACT* for Specialized Interim Ministry.
6. *EVALUATION FORMS* for Interim Ministers.
7. *ADDITIONAL RESOURCES* regarding Specialized Interim Ministry.

This Handbook has the authority of rules of order. Sections 3, 4, 5, and 6 are to be considered “standard operating procedures” which will provide fairness and good order to assure high quality interim ministry. Section 7 contains resources which are helpful, but not authoritative.

- Section 1 -

***POLICIES governing Specialized Interim Ministry in Classis Cascades***

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- A. A classis needs to approve a contract between one of its churches and a Specialized Interim Minister (SIM) who has been endorsed as qualified by the General Synod... The initial contract shall be for a minimum of six months but may not exceed one year. The contract may be renewed in increments of three months, up to a total of 18 months of service. Contracts may be terminated by either party with 30 days notice.
- B. The classis may permit the SIM to preside at meetings of the consistory if invited to do so, but the SIM shall not have the right to vote. The SIM does not replace the classis appointed supervisor nor may the SIM serve as the classis supervisor. (Notice: This is more restrictive than the *Book of Church Order*.)
- C. After seeking the advice of the congregation, the selection of a SIM rests on the consistory and the classis. A person who has previously served as an installed pastor of that congregation may not serve as a SIM in that particular congregation. A clear and specific contract will be signed by the SIM, the church and the classis of jurisdiction. A copy of this contract will be filed with the classis...The Standard Interim Ministry Contract will be used. (See Section 5.)
- D. The classis may strongly urge or require that a church under its general supervision contract with a SIM. The classis should understand its own financial obligations for such a prescription. ("The classis shall exercise general superintendence.... over the churches within its bounds..." *BCO*, Part II, Art. 2, Sec. 1, p.27.)
- E. Churches may only consider the SIM candidates who are endorsed as qualified by the General Synod and Classis...
- F. At the request of the Consistory the SIM may be a resource and/or advisor to the search process. The nature of this responsibility should be addressed in the SIM contract. It is important that all parties understand that the SIM shall not be permitted to be called to fill the pastoral vacancy in the church s/he serves.
- G. If the SIM does not have another assignment when his/her present contract concludes, via completion of its term or 30 day notification by the church, the congregation that was most recently served by the SIM is expected to provide up to one month of salary and benefits during this down time. If the SIM has terminated the contract, this down time provision does not apply. If the congregation is unable to meet this provision, Classis may be petitioned to provide financial assistance.
- H. A SIM is expected to increase his/her competency in conflict and crisis management and organizational development...The Church & Pastoral Supervision Committee will monitor the fulfillment of these expectations.
- I. The SIM will report to the Church & Pastoral Supervision Committee concerning the progress of the interim ministry at three (3) and six (6) month intervals and at the conclusion of the assignment. The classis supervisor will initiate an evaluation of the interim ministry at three (3) and six (6) month intervals and at the conclusion of the assignment. These reports and evaluations will be submitted to the Church & Pastoral Supervision Committee via the Office of the Stated Clerk...

- Section 2 -

FOUNDATION STATEMENTS

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The RCA *Book of Church Order* (Part II, Article 7, Sections 3 & 6, p. 29-30, 2002 ed.) mandates that have a bearing on Specialized Interim Ministry (SIM) policy:

**Sec. 3:** The classis shall appoint one of its ministers as supervisor of all proceedings of the consistory of a church without a minister or senior minister. The supervisor shall attend all formal meetings of the consistory, due notice having been given.

**Sec. 6:** The classis, at the request of the church or with its consent, may appoint a specialized interim minister to serve that church between installed ministers... provided the minister has been endorsed as qualified by the General Synod or its designated agent.

- Section 3a -

**STEPS FOR A CHURCH**

to move through to consider and obtain the services of a Specialized Interim Minister

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- ____ 1. When a pastoral vacancy is imminent, that congregation's vice president or departing pastor needs to notify the Classis Stated Clerk.
- ____ 2. The Stated Clerk will:
 - ____ a. notify the Chair of the Classis Church & Pastoral Supervision Committee regarding the appointment of a classis supervisor.
 - ____ b. inform the church's Vice-President of Consistory about Specialized Interim Ministry (SIM).
 - ____ c. send the church the appropriate information regarding SIM.
 - ____ d. advise the church to appoint a short term Transition Committee.
- ____ 3. The Transition Committee (or Consistory) will:
 - ____ a. oversee the transfer of all pastoral responsibilities to cover the church's immediate needs.
 - ____ b. conduct an exit interview.
 - ____ c. arrange for appropriate farewell celebrations.
 - ____ d. consider whether the congregation should seek the services of a SIM. (Inform congregation about the purpose of SIM and seek their input.)

(Note: A Pastoral Search Committee should not be appointed for 3 - 6 mos. and/or until a SIM is in place.)
- ____ 4. The Classis Church & Pastoral Supervision Committee will:
 - ____ a. appoint a supervisor for the vacant church as soon as possible.
 - ____ b. inform the church of the necessity of considering only certified or provisionally certified SIM candidates and the necessity of writing a SIM contract which will require classis approval.
 - ____ c. in certain circumstances strongly urge or even require a church to engage the services of a SIM. They may also need to arrange a classis financial subsidy.
- ____ 5. The Church's Transition Committee or other consistory appointed committee should follow these steps as they seek the services of a SIM:
 - ____ a. Complete the *Church Request for an Interim Minister* form and send it to the Chair, Classis Church & Pastoral Supervision Committee.
 - ____ b. The Classis Church & Pastoral Supervision Committee will recommend two or more SIM candidates to meet that congregation's needs and will provide appropriate profiles.
 - ____ c. Evaluate the candidates, checking references and perhaps listening to him/her preach.
 - ____ d. Interview candidate(s) and make a selection with counsel from the Classis supervisor.
 - ____ e. Using the Standard SIM Contract form, negotiate a contract that is acceptable to the church and the candidate, and meets current Classis guidelines. The supervisor will assist with this process.
 - ____ f. Obtain the approval of the Classis Church & Pastoral Supervision Committee of both the candidate and the contract

- _____g. Before the SIM begins his/her work, fully inform the congregation about the purpose of SIM and about their SIM minister.

(Note: The above process will normally be able to be completed in six to eight weeks.)

- _____h. Arrange for a brief Commissioning Service with a classis representative present to help launch a positive SIM ministry.

_____6. The SIM, the classis supervisor, and the consistory need to:

- _____a. work out a clear division of labor especially regarding presiding at consistory meetings and assisting the Search Committee.
- _____b. schedule three month, six month and concluding reports and evaluations using Interim Ministry Evaluation Forms furnished by the Church & Pastoral Supervision Committee.
- _____c. understand that the classis supervisor is to moderate any consistory discussions regarding termination or extension of the SIM contract. The supervisor will also preside at all congregational meetings pertaining to the call of a new pastor.

(Note: The SIM will not replace and may not serve as the classis supervisor.)

- Section 3b -

CHURCH REQUEST FOR AN INTERIM MINISTER

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1. Church \_\_\_\_\_ Classis \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_
2. Church Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_
3. Classis Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_
4. Date of this request \_\_\_\_\_
5. List Your Church's Paid Staff – Full Time (FT) – Part Time (PT)  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Previous Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ No. of yrs. At Church \_\_\_\_\_
7. Reasons church is requesting Interim Minister \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Issues your church may be dealing with or needs to deal with \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Worship Service times \_\_\_\_\_
10. Average attendance at each worship service \_\_\_\_\_
11. Preferred style of worship \_\_\_\_\_
12. Qualities or skills desired in an interim minister \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Preferred interim contract will commence on or about: \_\_\_\_\_ (date); and  
will end on or about: \_\_\_\_\_ (date).
14. Do you have a parsonage available to the interim? \_\_\_\_\_. If not, do you have  
other housing available if needed? \_\_\_\_\_
15. We are willing to abide by the Specialized Interim Ministry policies of Classis.

Signed/Dated \_\_\_\_\_ Office \_\_\_\_\_

**- Section 3c -**

**INTERIM MINISTER SEARCH INTERVIEW FORM**

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Candidate: _____ Date: _____

Opening: Prayer

Interviewing group members each introduce themselves: name, family, employment, how long a part of this church, present role in the church.

1. Please tell us about yourself and your family.

2. How did you come to choose ministry as a vocation?

3. Why did you become or why are you interested in becoming an interim minister?

4. What do you see as the key tasks of an interim minister and how would you approach each of those tasks if you were interim minister of our church?
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
D. _____
E. _____

5. How would your preaching relate to your role as an interim?

6. How would you help our congregation work through their feelings about our previous pastor leaving?

7. What is your preferred worship style? What is your philosophy of what a worship service should be?

8. What is your leadership style in dealing with consistory?

9. What kind of planning process might you use to help our congregation discover the future direction God has for us?

10. Which areas of ministry do you enjoy most? Which areas least?

11. What area of ministry do you consider your special area of giftedness?

12. How would you provide leadership to our church staff?

13. What is your approach to pastoral counseling, pastoral care and visitation?

14. Why should we ask you to be our Specialized Interim Minister?

15. How interested are you in our position?

16. What compensation would you require for your needs to be met as our interim minister?

17. Do you have any questions you want to ask of us?

Interview Rating:

- _____ Fully meets my requirements; I have no reservations.
- _____ Generally meets my requirements; I have minor reservations.
- _____ Generally OK, but I have one or more major reservations.
- _____ Fails to meet my requirements.

Principle Strengths:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Principle Weaknesses:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

- Section 4 -

STEPS FOR A MINISTER

to move through to become a Specialized Interim Minister

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1. Candidates need to consult with both the Classis Church & Pastoral Supervision Committee and the RCA Office of Ministry and Personnel Services (MAPS).
  
2. Candidates must obtain a letter of endorsement from their classis Executive Committee which is to be sent to the Classis Church & Pastoral Supervision Committee and to MAPS.
  
3. Candidates must be interviewed and approved by the Classis and recommended to MAPS. The decision on SIM candidacy will be based on personal qualifications and the perceived need for additional SIMs in the Synod of the Great Lakes.
  
4. A candidate may receive provisional endorsement from the Classis Church & Pastoral Supervision Committee to allow him/her to serve as an interim for one year if the above steps have been taken and a plan for interim training is in place.
  
5. Candidates must complete the necessary interim training provided by the *Interim Ministry Network* and must ultimately receive their certification.
  
6. Candidates must receive final endorsement from MAPS.
  
7. Endorsed candidates should seek additional training periodically to enhance their insight and skill.

- Section 5 -

**STANDARD SPECIALIZED INTERIM MINISTER CONTRACT**

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This contract between the consistory of _____
Church of _____ (city & state), the Rev. _____
and the Classis of _____ is for the purpose of providing interim
pastoral services for this congregation.

This contract is effective on _____ (date) and extends for _____ months (# of months),
through _____ (date).
(The contract shall be for a minimum of six months, but shall not exceed one year. The contract
may be renewed in increments of three months, up to a total of 18 months of service.)

This contract may be terminated by either party with 30 days notice being given.

If the Specialized Interim Minister (SIM) does not have another assignment when this contract
concludes, via completion of its term or 30 day notification by the church, the church is expected
to provide up to one month of salary and benefits during the SIM's down time. If the SIM
terminates this contract, this down time provision does not apply. If the congregation is unable
to meet this provision, financial assistance may be requested from Classis.

The SIM shall not be considered as a candidate for the pastoral vacancy of this church.

SIM RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Will provide normal pastoral and administrative leadership during the interim period.
2. Will provide special leadership, as needed, for helping the congregation deal with grief
and conflict and for assisting the church in the development of a direction for its future.
3. Will work with church leaders to accomplish these five developmental interim tasks:
 - a. Learning from our congregation's history.
 - b. Clarifying our identity and mission as we focus on our next chapter.
 - c. Facilitating leadership shifts.
 - d. Strengthening denominational ties.
 - e. Preparing for a new pastor.
4. Will ___ Will not ___ be a resource and/or advisor in the search process: The nature of this
responsibility will be: _____

5. Will submit the required reports as outlined elsewhere in the classis policy.

Additional Responsibilities or Explanations of the above Responsibilities:

The SIM will average at least _____ hours per week in service to the church: these hours may
include other RCA responsibilities as agreed to by the consistory and the SIM.

The Classis will appoint a supervisor to work with the consistory and the interim minister. The
SIM will not replace or serve as the classis supervisor. The SIM, the classis supervisor and the
consistory will work out a clear division of labor regarding presiding at Consistory meetings. The
classis supervisor will preside at all congregational meetings pertaining to securing a new
pastor.

CHURCH RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Cash Salary of \$_____ per month.
2. Housing Allowance of \$ _____ per month.
3. Accountable Business Expense of \$ _____ per contract term, OR car allowance of \$ _____ per mile or actual expenses as outlined in classis requirements.
4. RCA Annuities and Insurances as per classis requirements.
5. Social Security reimbursement of \$ _____ per month as per classis requirements.
6. Professional Development of \$ _____ per contract term and _____ week(s) as outlined in classis requirements.
7. _____ weeks vacation.

Additional Salary / Benefit Considerations:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

The Consistory will provide support for and will work together with the SIM on interim tasks and establishing a direction for the church's ministry and mission.

ADDITIONAL AGREEMENTS:

SIGNATURES:

_____	_____	_____	_____
Vice President of Consistory	Date	Specialized Interim Minister	Date
_____	_____	_____	_____
Classis Supervisor	Date	Stated Clerk of Classis	Date

- Section 6 -

EVALUATION FORMS for interim ministry

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**INTERIM MINISTRY THREE MONTH EVALUATION**

To be completed by the classis supervisor in conversation with the Consistory and to be discussed with the interim minister.

1. To what extent is the SIM meeting the expectations of the congregation as outlined in the contract? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What areas need improvement? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What progress has been made on the SIM's five developmental tasks?  
a. Learning from history: \_\_\_\_\_  
b. Exploring a new identity: \_\_\_\_\_  
c. Facilitating leadership shifts: \_\_\_\_\_  
d. Strengthening denominational ties: \_\_\_\_\_  
e. Preparing for a new pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

3. What approach is the SIM using for the assessment process? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What progress has been made? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What basic issues are emerging that will have to be addressed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What resources will be needed to help address these issues? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What will need special attention during the next three months? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. What is the status of the search process? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Has the SIM completed a written three month report describing the current situation including leadership, attendance, morale, spiritual life, programs; identifying the issues; and laying out a plan to address the issues? \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign below indicating that you have discussed this with each other.

Interim Minister \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Classis Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Vice-President of Consistory \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

[Send a completed copy of this form to the Classis Stated Clerk.]

## INTERIM MINISTRY SIX MONTH EVALUATION

To be completed by the classis supervisor in conversation with the Consistory and to be discussed with the interim minister.

1. To what extent is the SIM meeting the expectations of the congregation as outlined in the contract?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
What areas need improvement? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How helpful has the SIM been in:  
Preaching? \_\_\_\_\_  
Pastoral Care? \_\_\_\_\_  
Administration? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What progress has been made on the SIM's five developmental tasks?
  - A. Learning from history: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Exploring a new identity: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Facilitating leadership shifts: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Strengthening denominational ties: \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Preparing for a new pastor: \_\_\_\_\_
4. What key issues need to be addressed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
What progress is being made in addressing these issues? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the status of the search process? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
How is the SIM relating to this process? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What will need special attention during the next three months? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Has the SIM completed a written progress report describing future prospects and alternatives for this congregation? \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign below indicating that you have discussed this with each other.

|                                    |            |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Interim Minister _____             | Date _____ |
| Classis Supervisor _____           | Date _____ |
| Vice-President of Consistory _____ | Date _____ |

[Send a completed copy of this form to the Classis Stated Clerk.]

## INTERIM MINISTRY CONCLUDING EVALUATION

To be completed by the classis supervisor and to be discussed with the Consistory and the Interim Minister.

1. What was the duration of this interim assignment?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Was that too brief, too long, just right? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Were the contractual agreements of the church to the interim and the interim to the church satisfied? \_\_\_\_\_  
If not, in what way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. To what extent did the gifts, passions and priorities of this interim minister fit this church situation?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What are the strengths of this interim?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. In what areas does this interim minister need to grow? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. To what extent did the interim prepare this congregation for a new pastor? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Did the interim complete a final written report outlining the assessment process, the search processes that were used, and identifying the issues this congregation will need to deal with in the next two years? \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign below indicating that you have discussed this with each other.

|                                    |            |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Interim Minister _____             | Date _____ |
| Classis Supervisor _____           | Date _____ |
| Vice-President of Consistory _____ | Date _____ |

[Send a completed copy of this form to the Classis Stated Clerk.]

- Section 7 -

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES** regarding Specialized Interim Ministry

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1. Temporary Shepherds, is a Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry, Roger S. Nicholson, ed., Alban Institute Publication, 1998. This very helpful 205 page resource book can be ordered from the RCA Distribution Center at 1-800-968-7221.
2. "A SIM for Name Church?" is a 5 x 8 bulletin insert that can be adapted for your church to provide basic information to your congregation regarding Specialized Interim Ministry.
3. Appropriate Goals for the Interim Period.
4. "Why Call an Interim Pastor?" is a brief article by Roger Schwarze in the July, 1996 issue of Net Results.
5. "Paving the Way", an article in the Western Seminary Alumni Newsletter of November, 1999, about Rick Veenstra.
6. "Litanies of Welcome and Farewell to the Interim Pastor", are commissioning services for Specialized Interim Ministers from Temporary Shepherds, Roger S. Nicholson, ed., Alban Institute Publication, 1998.

Classis Contacts for Specialized Interim Ministry:

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