

INTERIM MINISTRY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AFTER 10 YEARS -

GUIDELINES FROM THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE *November 2014*

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1. BACKGROUND:

1.1. BEGINNINGS AND GROWTH.

From 2004, Interim Ministry began to receive the particular attention and focus in Southern Africa that was already enjoyed collectively by the church in the USA, where the concept originated. Several people played a role in the implementing of the Interim Ministry in Southern Africa, like Dr Arnold Smit, a consultant, and Rev Helen Dekker of the Hervormde Kerk in the Netherlands and Prof Malan Nel well known theologian from the DRC. (A short overview of the origins of Interim Ministry in South Africa can be found on the web: www.nimsa.co.za). In 2005 the Highveld Synod, of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) instructed one of its portfolios of synod to explore and develop the concept and implementation, on a trial basis. Interim Ministers were trained to function as Interim Ministers/Pastors. Apart from the training on an ecumenical basis offered in Pretoria, training was also begun in Stellenbosch. The concept expanded more and more. By the end of 2014 there were already some 125 graduate Interim Pastors formally trained by the two training centres representing placements in 39 congregations in a variety of denominations as “Brugpredikante” or Interim Pastors/Ministers.

The name “Brugbediening” proposed by Ds. Barry van Rensburg was thus coined and adopted during this period. Previously the concept was termed “brugpastoraat” but the term “pastoraat” was too restrictive. The terminology “transitional ministry” is more descriptive and definitive than the historical concept of “interim”. The concept “brug” (bridge) is also more positive and descriptive than the more neutral term “interim”. It relates to a bridging action from one ministry circumstance, to a new one. The transition developed previously mostly in the calling of a new pastor. But during the past years it doesn’t happen so often any more. It may even happen that the transition takes place from the situation of a congregation with a minister, to a congregation without a minister. It will be discussed further (cf e.g. 4.6 and 4.7)

The theological construct for Transitional Ministry lies in the Missional Church and in the Upbuilding of the Church (“Gemeentebou”). The Mission of God remains central. The triune God sends His church out into the world. It embraces a fresh understanding of the functioning of a church community as the newly formed “Kingdom” people that Jesus has radically set apart. What applies to the DRC was examined by the canon law expert, Hannes Windell, in the church regulations of October, 2013 (DRC) who concluded that the congregation has a calling and responsibility as understood in the light of the *missio Dei*. This is important for a correct understanding of the task and calling of the offices, believers and the church council (archdeaconry structures and synods).

1.2. FURTHER DEFINITION AND EXPANSION.

The need arose after some 10 years of exposure to Transitional/Brugbediening Ministry, to more formally describe and define¹ what the ministry embraced. From inception, dr Howard du Toit has been involved in Transitional Ministry, and he writes as an “insider”. Ds. Johan van Loggerenberg later added by writing from a fresh perspective with a critical point of view and can be construed in this sense as giving an “outsider” perspective. The objective description of Interim Ministry after 10 years is not presented as a scientifically based empirical study. It is rather to be viewed as the point of departure and policy, as well as the description of existing practices. Not much has been written so far concerning “success stories” of the Transitional Ministry. (On the website of NIMSA a few examples are available). A scientific analysis of patterns and best practices is still necessary and sought. Comment has been requested from various sources and valuable insights and comments received, namely from Dr Martin Lazenby, Ds Anton Doyer, Prof Malan Nel, The Rev Errol Dengler, Ds Hannes Windell, Ds Hannes Janse van Rensburg, Dr Bertus Koorts and Ds Ernst Zeelie.

As the result of many factors, life and the society in the last decades have become much more complex. In Southern Africa we experience many radical changes and transformational processes. The metaphor been used often in this regard, is that of a storm or perfect storm that represent many factors that enhance the intensity and disruptive influence in church and world. The church and Christians must learn to serve the stormy waves!

In conjunction with this, the functioning of congregations has also become more complicated and diversified. Congregations in Southern Africa no longer show identical structures with the same canonical church model. Because of the needs of communities which are becoming more diverse and differentiated, the need for interim ministry is becoming more apparent. Each congregation is a unique reality. Awareness has developed in Practical Theology that congregations are social systems that respond and function within psycho-sociological rules and laws. Systemic systems must be distinctly separated from the older conceptual approach of mechanical linear thinking. This shift must be specifically accounted for in interim Ministry. This is a better framework in which to approach reality. The congregation as a whole is more readily discernible and it helps to deal with the complexities of congregations more easily. This often chaotic shifts must be borne in mind in the Interim Ministry.

1.3. GUIDELINES:

Initially, Interim Ministry was introduced in practice without formulating synodical decisions or canonical rules (a bottom up approach). At first it was questioned how Interim Ministry could work in practice (prototypes) and only later in the DRC were regulations sought and developed. Through the A tot Z-Handleiding vir Predikante (The A to Z –Guideline for Ministers) in 2007, under the title “Mobiliteit” (Mobility) it was announced that the General Synod would implement the necessary rules for the regulation of the “brugpastoraat” (interim ministry). Eventually in 2013, the General Synod of the DRC adopted a resolution

¹) ¹ At the Algemene Kerkvergadering (Agenda 2013, 502-513) of the Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa, a memorandum was tabled which presented an understanding of Interim Ministry. In the magazine “Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika/Practical Theology in South Africa” (Vol. 20 (1) 2005, 43-58), a description of interim ministry in South Africa was presented. Errol Dengler in “The Southern Anglican” also presented various articles on the state and development of interim ministry from an Anglican perspective. This treatise however relates to interim ministry primarily from an NGK point of view.)

which was as such not approved but forwarded to the General Competence Board (ABR)/ General Task team for Ministers matters (ATP) to develop guidelines for interim ministry. For the “development of guidelines” this treatise endeavoured to make a contribution. It still remained unclear in the DRC where Interim Ministry belonged on the level of the General Synod. According to the advice of Dr Dewyk Ungerer, a “guideline” indicates the way along which or the manner in which a matter/policy could be practically executed or applied. There is room for discretion to make adjustments in this approach as long as the principle is not deviated from, nor the policy laid down ignored. The following section has been written in the light of this approach.

2. PLANNING IRO TRANSITION IN A CONGREGATION:

The change of a community’s minister/priest/pastor is an important transitional time in the life of a congregation. Leave must be taken of the community’s leader who usually dictated the pace for a number of years. He had undoubtedly crept into the hearts of some of the members while others were not necessarily approving of his ways. Some begin a genuine grieving process while others would be excited for someone new to begin as soon as possible. It is thus necessary for a period of time to elapse to adequately deal with the range of emotions and competing reactions in the congregation, such as anger/ecstasy, grief/joy, uncertainty/hope etc.

The departure brings with it a specific form of collective trauma counseling which must never be underestimated. It is of importance that the difference between grief and sorrow be understood. Sorrow binds and holds communities back, longing for the past. Grief is painful but brings healing and allows congregations to prepare for future possibilities. The church in its broader context, such as the archdeaconry structure and synod, has a responsibility, together with the congregation, to look for the best options for the congregation. It is particularly necessary that the congregation’s theological and contextual identity be examined in this transition period. The context of the future structure as well as the factors that could govern, or influence the wellbeing and continued existence of that congregation, like financial sustainability, desire for working together/ merging with neighbouring congregations, etc. must be thoroughly explored. Various options in respect of pastoral leadership must be evaluated and considered in the light of future planning for the congregation:

- Different ministers can be used for Sunday worship. The church council and supply minister help with other pastoral tasks;
- A minister can be appointed as a Pastoral Assistant or contract worker. This type of ministry is directed towards normal community work/ maintenance;
- Communities can directly call a full time or part time “tentmaker” minister and thereby end the particular growth opportunity or “teachable moment” in a congregation;
- An Interim Minister/pastor can be appointed to journey with a congregation through its transitional time of change to a new phase in the life of the congregation.

3. THE RATIONALE FOR INTERIM MINISTRY²:

3.1. WHAT IS INTERIM MINISTRY?

It is the ministry through which an experienced minister, who is specially trained to assist congregations during a vacancy in leadership, helps them to achieve and understand their calling. They are appointed for a fixed period but are not eligible for placement in that particular community. They fulfil the functions of a minister and assist a congregation to properly take leave of the former leadership and to prepare for a new phase. This could mean a possible new growth phase in the congregation or for the calling of an appropriate minister to integrate with the needs of a specific congregation. The Interim Ministry has also a special value for the ordinary ministry in a congregation because each congregation in our country is functioning in an interim situation as result of a radical changing setup.

3.2. FURTHER PERSPECTIVES:

The point of departure for Interim Ministry during transitional times, is that, with good leadership, congregations can grow in self awareness and be empowered to effectively deliver good service to the congregation. The change of ministers can on the one hand bring an end to a relationship and on the other

prepare for the formulation of a new relationship. It affects people on a very personal level. The tendency is to fill vacancies for ministers as soon as possible. Where ministers have featured strongly in the witness and taken over the service aspects of a congregation, the departure of the minister was viewed as a great loss. This culture of calling a replacement too soon is actually detrimental to the wellbeing of the community.

To move towards the appointment of someone new too quickly could short circuit the congregation's potential to complete its developmental tasks. The urgency is heightened where the departing minister served for a long period, or where there are serious unresolved issues in the congregation. Interim Ministry is a mechanism to assist the congregation to handle hurt and conflict, to resolve problems and embrace changes that are essential to welcome a new minister. It is a means to assist where a temporary minister equipped through appropriate training and experience can help a congregation to prepare for a new pastoral relationship and to open a new chapter in its story of service, witness and worship.

The core of Transitional Ministry revolves around the large developmental goals or focus areas of the congregation. It is concerned with understanding of the congregation of itself as well as an understanding of its own existence and rationale. It embraces the following:

- a. The right perspective on history (the past);
- b. Saying goodbye to the departing minister and all the grieving which this entails;
- c. Rediscovery of the congregation's identity, as already described as the calling of the congregation;
- d. Changes in and empowerment of leadership;
- e. Renewal of contact with the wider church;
- f. Preparation for a new chapter in the light of the changed context.

3.3. UNAVAILABILITY FOR PERMANENT APPOINTMENT:

There must be no doubt that an interim minister may not apply for, or be appointed as, the full time minister in a congregation where he/she serves. The rationale behind this is as follows: a good interim minister is not necessarily the appropriate full time pastor, - there are different gifts and capabilities necessary for every situation. If an appointment were possible, it could influence the interim pastor in his approach to his work. Risky situations could be consciously or unconsciously avoided. An interim pastor would also have an unfair advantage over other candidates because the candidate is already there and well known. It could also occur that an interim minister is not called after applying which would have a negative impact and unlock various associated emotions. Should an interim minister be available for the same post in the congregation, some ministers could possibly become interim pastors for the wrong

1) ² In the Afrikaans version the term "Brugbediening" is used. In English speaking denominations the term "Transitional "or "Interim Ministry" is used.

motives to possibly get a foot in the door for a possible calling. The knowledge that the interim minister is only temporarily with the congregation, improves the congregations capacity to change.

4. WHEN IS AN INTERIM PASTOR NECESSARY?

4.1. In one sense **every congregation** experiencing a change of pastors should have an interim minister appointed as the community circumstances and life of the congregation often change very rapidly. After every 3-5 years every congregation should evaluate their ministry as well as analyzing their own unique role and function. The whole situation of being a congregation in our times has become more complex and varied than previously. For this reason it is desirable for communities to search more diligently for the right type of minister to adjust and fit the specific needs of that congregation. It is amazing how much damage and pain arises if the wrong minister is called!

From experience in practice, it has already been shown that a congregation is permanently damaged as a result of the placement of a minister without first researching the needs and service requirements of the community. There are examples of congregations who have been radically reduced in size through such

interventions that their continued existence as a congregation is compromised. The times in which we live today, where the geographical location of communities no longer guarantee membership numbers, the calling of the “wrong” minister can no longer be allowed.

- 4.2. **Trauma** could appear within a congregation as a result of the unexpected death of a minister or arise when there is internal conflict within the church council/congregation, or through malpractice. Congregations are emotional systems and the emotional levels within congregations must be dealt with. It is better for the interim minister who has additional training in these situations, to give attention to these issues and help to resolve them. Members often have grievances about what a previous minister did or perhaps did not do.
- 4.3. **After a long and “successful” ministry** of the previous incumbent, it is necessary to have a period of time in which the community can rediscover its identity, free from any influence of the previous pastor. If new leadership is called for too early - such is the experience of research - then someone is invariably called very similar to, or completely opposite to the previous incumbent. No. An interim minister can help to relook at the purpose of a congregation and question what direction the community is taking.
- 4.4. In our times it has been observed afresh, that the church must reach out to the community. The *missio Dei* of the church over the past years has been recognized: the church does not send, but rather God in trinity sends into the world. “As the Father has sent me, so I send you also.” (John 20:21). The interim minister can assist the congregation to understand what it means to be **“new church”** and accompany them on a journey from inward looking to one that understands its calling and witness to the world. The 21st century in a changed world presents new demands on congregations.
- 4.5. Going hand in glove with the previous point is the question about what the congregation expects of the interim minister. Experience in practice indicates that a transitional minister is often compared to a **“supply minister”**. Does the church council expect “business as usual” in other words continuing along the same old lines and patterns? Or is the church council searching for someone who can assist and inspire the community to seek afresh what God expects of the congregation, here and now (compare point 4.4) The interim minister’s role is to assess together with the congregation’s leadership what God’s purpose and calling is for the community. In which direction is God, through His Spirit, leading the community? This aspect also needs to be thoroughly discussed with the congregation. It relates to “intentional interim ministry” or specifically goal driven/specialized interim ministry (compare point 10).
- 4.6. In various articles it is mentioned that Interim Ministry should look at **wider issues** than simply the interim period of change of pastors during an interim ministry. Circumstances and aspects like developing a new ministry style, a change in the character of the location, expanding the vision of the community, etc. arise. We find this in publications such as Loren Mead, Alan Gripe, Roger Nicholson, Helen Dekker and others from the “Classical” time period of Interim Ministry. In South Africa, there is still a hesitation to follow a broader approach.
- 4.7. Others are of the opinion that the interim minister should personally handle **other options** like the merging/amalgamation of congregations, church planting, joint projects amongst communities, the closing of congregations (the so called “hospice” – option), etc. The question remains whether the interim has been trained for these. The basics are that interim ministers should at least be equipped to prepare congregations for these choices. These issues should be investigated in conjunction with the archdeaconry (“ringskommissie”) or consultant.

5. **QUALIFICATIONS FOR AN INTERIM MINISTER:**

Not all licensed ministers can function effectively as interim ministers. A range of qualifications are required for an interim pastor. The following abilities are relevant:

- Numerous gifts and abilities, applicable to normal ministry requirements apply to the interim minister, such as conflict resolution, organizational abilities, handling change, being a good listener, attuned differentiation skills, strong calling as a minister, effective communication, good inter-personal relationships, a propensity for study, skilful leadership, uprightness and integrity.
- The special knowledge and accomplishments that the interim minister also should possess, include: community analysis, geographical analysis/location, change management, systemic principles, envisioning processes, strategic community planning and development, scenario identification and Interpretation, the principles of conflict resolution, general administration and problem solving abilities as well as how to inculcate leadership qualities and manage them.
- Comprehensive pastoral experience as a minister in a congregation, (preferably in more than one congregation/parish) is essential.
- Specialised training as an interim minister is also very important.
- The interim minister should be consulted in the handling of trauma in groups as well as with individuals. If he/she does not personally have the appropriate knowledge, then he/she should at least know where specialized help is available.

6. SCREENING AND EVALUATION:

- It is essential that good standards should be maintained in Interim Ministry. In practice it appears that ministers present themselves and some congregations use them as “interim ministers”, although they are not qualified or trained for such a role. This can bring Interim Ministry into disrepute.
- In place of simply selecting, a recommendation from the present/previous congregation is desirable. Recommendations and references from colleagues can also be taken into account.
- Screening should also be done through the various church mechanisms, such as consultation with presenters of training of interim ministers, as well as through archdeaconries and structures of synod.
- Also during training self selection occurs as presenters and students learn about one another. Needless to say but not all ministers are suitable or have the qualities to be an interim minister.
- Evaluation is also desirable during the interim ministry period. At set times, e.g. 3, 6 and 12 months, the progress of the interim minister as well as the church council/congregation should be monitored and evaluated.
- Various contexts in different congregations require different personalities and style for an interim minister.

7. CALLING/APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERIM MINISTER:

The appointment of an interim minister in the DRC must always be considered in the light of Regulation 15 regarding Fixed Term Appointments. In denominations with an Episcopal Structure, the bishop will be involved with the appointment of transitional ministers.

- 7.1.** Although the church council of every congregation is the responsible body for decisions regarding a particular community, the church council may request assistance from the archdeaconry/structure or synod³. The role of the “konsulent” or relieving minister (in Presbyterian circles called the “interim moderator”) is of great importance. It would be advisable that someone with training as an interim minister, or who possesses knowledge of interim processes in congregations, be appointed as “konsulent” (assisting pastor within the presbytery, also called consultant) regarding the vacancy of a minister in that congregation.
- 7.2.** In the light of 7.1 a church council may during any vacancy for a minister, conduct discussions with the archdeaconry, the consultant and a knowledgeable person from the synod. During such discussions, the service needs and requirements of congregations, their future needs and the possibility of appointing an interim minister can be raised. In the Anglican Church it is imperative that the Bishop is advised, as the final placement rests with him. In the Highveld Synod (DRC) transitional consultants are identified who advise the congregation should a suitable expert not be available. The church council can appoint a temporary commission for the appointment of an interim minister, but the commission must constantly keep the church council informed about developments.

- 7.3. Should it appear from the discussions (7.2) that an interim minister is desirable, the names of suitably qualified interim ministers can be requested. The leaders of the relevant training courses or the Synod Service Group for Interim Ministry thus do not only have a register of trained transitional ministers but can give a good indication of suitable candidates for specific situations. It is important that persons who act as interim ministers have received formal specialized training. The functioning and future planning in respect of congregations is too weighty a matter to be attempted without adequate preparation. It is also preferable to screen the transitional ministers. (See point 6 above).
- 7.4. The church council should meet the recommended available interim pastors and determine and discuss the pastoral and community needs thoroughly. Upon conclusion a contract of appointment must be discussed and completed. Various discussions may be needed in this regard. The church council then appoints the best candidate to meet the requirements of the congregation, after consultation with the committee of the presbytery/archdeaconry structure. During the entire process the community and the church council must be aware of the leading of the Spirit of God and seek to follow accordingly.
- 7.5. A binding agreement or service agreement is discussed and in consultation with the interim minister, the committee of the presbytery/archdeaconry structure and the synods service group for interim ministry, should be finalized and signed - preferably before the interim minister starts in the congregation. The contract includes all details, which are discussed later in this treatise.
- 7.6. Good communication in respect of the Interim Ministry is essential:
- The local archdeaconry structure must be involved in the approval of the interim minister's appointment.
 - The congregation must be informed beforehand of the arrival of the interim minister as well as his function and role as well as the duration of his appointment etc.
- 7.7 The interim minister is received and introduced to the community at a special worship service. This also applies in respect of his/her departure. Every denomination has its own guidelines and forms for this purpose.

1) ³ In the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika, they refer to an "Algemene Kerkvergadering" and in Anglican circles a "Diocese").

8 DEVELOPMENT OF A CONTRACT OR SERVICE AGREEMENT:

The term "verbondsooreenkoms" or covenant is far more weighty and binding than a simple contract. Rather than speaking of a contract, it must be seen as an agreement about the things of and work of God to which the church council and interim minister are called to serve. Before the interim minister commences work with a congregation, the service agreement should ideally be finalized and the details disclosed to the community.

The contract/covenant contains the following:

- **Background** regarding the circumstances why a decision was made to call an interim minister and the steps taken to call the particular interim minister. The names of the signatories are given.
- **Declaration of intention** from the church council and interim minister with the consent of the congregation, archdeaconry and synod, all in accordance with the ministry needs of the congregation.
- **Goals and Tasks of the Interim Ministry.**

The developmental tasks of the congregation are generally seen as the framework for the implementation of the goals and tasks of Interim Ministry. These developmental tasks or focus areas have already been discussed at 3.2 above.

- **Roles and Responsibilities of the Interim Minister.**

The Transitional Minister is responsible for leadership in two crucial areas:

- a. The work relating to the church council and congregation regarding the specific goals and tasks of Interim Ministry.
- b. The normal responsibilities relating to being a minister.

It is essential that the roles, responsibilities, hours of service, leave, etc. of the transitional minister must be clearly spelt out (See point 9).

- **Duration of service.**

The length of the period of employment of an interim minister can change dependant on the degree of traumatising of the congregation and how quickly the Interim Ministry is making inroads. The interim minister can be appointed for 9-12 months with an option to extend the period by a further 6 months, if necessary. A certain flexibility should be built into the contract so that it may be altered if agreed to by the parties.

- **Remuneration and Allowances**

The arrangements in the agreement regarding remuneration and allowances must be jointly agreed between the church council and transitional minister. The content should also be approved by the archdeaconry structure in conjunction with the Service Group for Interim Ministry.

NB: It remains to be said that each congregation is unique and the agreement must take the specific circumstances into consideration.

9 TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VARIOUS ROLE PLAYERS:

- 9.1 The church council/ congregation are pertinent role players in the acceptance of interim ministry. The developmental tasks or focus areas which are central to the classical viewpoint of interim ministry, relate to the tasks undertaken by the community. These tasks should be incorporated in the service agreement and the representatives of the congregation should undertake to support both the interim minister and the interim ministry processes. This trust relationship is essential.
- 9.2 The interim minister is both “outsider” and “insider” to the congregation. He/she do not come as an expert to prescribe “top down”, but rather to listen and ask questions. The culture of the congregation is always respected. Somewhere, God was already at work in the community. With time the transitional minister can as an outsider seek the intention of God’s Holy Spirit, in searching with the congregation, God’s leading for them in the various tasks and phases required.
- 9.3 The transitional minister is both a member of the congregation and a member of the church council where he/she is employed as an interim minister.
- 9.4 The transitional minister is responsible for the pastoral care of the congregation but is not necessarily the chairperson of the church council.
- 9.5 The interim minister is appointed as the incumbent of the congregation and not merely as a pastoral assistant. His/her appointment is also approved by the archdeaconry structure. The transitional minister is competent to undertake all functions of a full time minister. The interim minister is necessarily subject to the control of the archdeaconry structure to which he/she must account.
- 9.6 The calling of the next full time minister for the congregation, should this be decided upon, is done under guidance of the consultant of the congregation. The interim minister could assist with the preparation for such a calling by doing the congregational profile as well as the profile for the expected new minister. In some instances a greater role is accorded the transitional minister regarding the proposed calling. Possible

wrong perceptions must be guarded against that the transitional minister may give preference to certain candidates.

- 9.7 The possibility of providing the interim minister with a mentor should be explored. The interim minister can deal with the involvement of an advisor in a personal manner. The cooperation of a task force of congregants would be advisable. The interim pastor can't do it on his/her own.
- 9.8 The transitional minister reports regularly to the church council, to the archdeaconry structure and the Service Group for Interim Ministry of the Synod regarding progress made (3, 6 and/or 12 monthly).
- 9.9 Apart from the exit interview that the transitional minister gives before his/her departing, it is advisable that the interim minister also provides insights for the induction or teamwork programme for the new minister when inducted.
- 9.10 The relationship between consultant and the interim minister should also be well defined. At one of the first communities where the practice of interim ministry began, there were considerable misunderstandings. The consultant is not replaced by the transitional minister, but each has their respective place. Job descriptions of all the relevant parties should be carefully defined from inception.

10. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

In determining the interim minister's remuneration the following factors should be considered:

- Interim Ministry is a specialized calling requiring focused training;
- The transitional minister does the work of the normal incumbent minister, as well as the additional tasks required by interim ministry;
- The remuneration takes cognizance of the job description as well as how many work hours are required of the interim minister;
- The remuneration of the last incumbent minister must be borne in mind;
- Should the interim minister be a retired minister, then medical and pension provisions are not the responsibility of the church council. Provision must be made for accommodation, telephone and travelling costs;
- The remuneration can be adjusted according to the circumstances. It is finalized through negotiation.

11. TRAINING:

11.1 Since its inception the Christian church has always had periods of change as part of its story. Biblical examples can easily be applied. In the past few decades specific attention has been given to these periods of transition by the church and particularly by congregations. "Intentional Interim Ministry" is spoken of openly. We can speak of goal oriented and specialized Interim Ministry. The church has become a far more complex and multi layered organism than previously. Communities are exposed to far more and detailed changes on the level of communal life in which congregations function. This applies in a particular sense to South Africa with change and transformation processes being applied in every facet of life during the past few decades. In the light of this, appropriate ministers/pastors/priests have been specially trained to handle these transitional situations. The ecumenical nature of the training as well as the association with NIMSA is necessary, but each denomination can develop its particular church's requirements, accents and differences.

11.2 It is essential that interim ministers are thoroughly trained to enable them to give meaningful help to congregations which experience a variety of experiences. The considerations why an interim minister is essential have already been set out under point 4 above.

11.3 In South Africa, training is offered at two centres:

- An annual ecumenical training course is offered by the Centre for Contextual Ministry which is part of the Theological Faculty at the University of Pretoria, which embraces two contact weeks. If numbers warrant it, the course is offered in both English and Afrikaans. Costs are currently R157000 pp. Ministers/priests/pastors approved by their own denominations/synods, are eligible.

- An annual two week contact course is also offered by Communitas, which is linked to the Theological Faculty of the University of Stellenbosch, for ministers/priests/pastors approved by their own denominations/synods. The tuition fees are currently free.
- This training can also be offered on a decentralized basis if numbers and costs justify it, for example in connection with archdeaconries.
- Information about course times and contact persons are available on the NIMSA website.
- The theological constructs for both training centres are sought in what is meant by “being church” and community building. There may well be different accents adopted by the two centres but regular contact ensures that essentially the same approach is followed.
- The focus of the curriculum embraces not only a theoretical framework but also the requisite life experience, hands on approach and provision of the requisite “tools”.
- In our country we also apply the insights gained from the churches in the USA but emphasis is lent to the spirituality and context of Africa.

12 AIMS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE TASK GROUP FOR INTERIM MINISTRY OF SYNOD:

- 12.1 The appropriate task groups of every synod/diocese, in conjunction with the archdeaconry structures, are co-responsible for the selection of candidates for Interim Ministry, as mentioned in point 6 above. Only ministers who qualify, should be trained and available for this specialized work.
- 12.2 The marketing of Interim Ministry for the purposes of having trained interim ministers available for congregations is primarily done via published and electronic media. Where interim ministers have worked well in communities and borne fruit, their contributions are well acknowledged. Because of the variable requirements and needs coupled with the great distances in our country, there should be a greater availability of interim ministers than demand for placements.
- 12.3 The support and mentoring of practicing interim ministers is of great importance. Accomplished interim ministers can be recommended. The regular meeting and discussion by interim ministers is necessary to “sharpen” and further equip them. To this end the Forum in the north was established.
- 12.4 Regular reports to the Service Group of Synod are necessary as well as reports from them to Synod.
- 12.5 In the Highveld Synod (DRC), archdeaconry representatives from each archdeaconry have been indicated. Most of these have experienced and undergone Interim Ministry training. A closer interaction between the Task Group of Synod for Interim Ministry and archdeaconries/congregations is thereby possible.

13 NIMSA:

From the inception of the implementation of Interim Ministry in South Africa has been done in conjunction with different denominations. Quite probably smaller denominations would not individually be able to develop and offer satisfactory local training for Transitional Ministry. This ecumenical co-operation was evidenced in the formation of the Network for Interim Ministry in Southern Africa (NIMSA) in 2008. In Afrikaans it is known as the Netwerk vir Interim/Brugbediening (NIBSA). (See Kruisgewys, Jan 2014, for a description of what NIMSA means). There are currently 7 denominations participating, namely:

- Ned Herv Kerk van Afrika
- Anglican Church of Southern Africa
- Ned Geref Kerk
- United Congregational Church of Southern Africa
- Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa
- United Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa □ Apostolic Faith Mission

The following persons are members of the Board:

- Bossie Muller (NGK) as Chairman
- Howard du Toit (NGK) as Vice Chairman

- Hannes Janse van Rensburg (NHKA) – Finance committee
- Anastasia Bukashe (Angl.)

The website of NIMSA www.nimsa.co.za is handled by Martin Lazenby (doklazenby@gmail.com).

14 THE WAY FORWARD:

- 14.1 The training of interim ministers must still be expanded to meet the demands of our times. The two training centres must safeguard against drifting apart recognizing the need for joint planning and a uniform approach.
- 14.2 An attempt must be made to involve more denominations and members from the churches in the activities of NIMSA.
- 14.3 A constant search for improved excellence regarding the quality of training as well as the quality of service to and in the congregations must be sought.
- 14.4 The continued equipping and training of interim ministers must be developed.
- 14.5 The possibility and desirability of using interim ministers across denominational lines must be more closely examined and ventured.