

REPORT FROM THE OUTGOING DIRECTOR OF TRANSITIONAL MINISTRIES

Interim Ministry

Once upon a time, many, many years ago, in the time between Rectors, a supply priest would be appointed to take Sunday services, and the occasional funeral. The Wardens would just hope that no significant pastoral crisis would arise before the new Rector arrived. One the new Rector came to town, they would take up their work frequently bringing their own style and values to the ministry they were undertaking. A new epoch began in the parish, sometimes without too much reference to the patterns of the parish, or the context of ministry. The holes in this system are clearly apparent.

Once upon a time, but far more recently, “pastoral transition” was the phrase used for the time “in between” settled clergy. At that time, an “interim” was usually appointed, to walk with the congregation through the process of work, learning and worship in the time “between Rectors”.

In the present day in the Diocese of Niagara, the time between incumbents is no longer as predictable as it once was. Currently, a trained interim might be assigned to be with a congregation for a variety of reasons: an Interim may be a “first responder” in a situation where there has been a trauma, such as the death of the Rector. An Interim may also come to be in place because there has been a situation such as misconduct, and they have supplementary training in walking with the parish through such difficult circumstances. An Interim may be in place to assist the parish in re-evaluating the full-time equivalent of ministry that the congregation now requires. At times, the services of an Interim are needed to assist the parish in a path of closure, in consultation with the Diocesan Bishop. All of those “other” reasons for appointing an Interim are in addition to the more typical pattern of pastoral transition.

In our Diocese, our trained Interim pastors have met informally on a monthly basis, and at least once a year, we met for additional training. Over the past six years, we have been indebted to the Reverend Canon Bill Thomas, former Director of Interim Ministry for the Diocese of Niagara, and currently a trainer with the Interim Ministry Network, for providing that training.

In February of 2011, I concluded my work as the Director of Transitional Ministry, to take up a new position as Secretary of Synod and Director of Safe Church and Volunteer Management and Screening. This is, therefore, my final report as the Director of Transitional Ministry, which has included both my work with Interims and parishes in transition as well as my work with Fresh Start.

One of the parts of this work that I shall particularly miss will be the work that I have done “on the ground” with parishes as an Interim while I was engaged with Interim ministry. I learned a great deal as an Interim Pastor, and was constantly holding in tension the “developmental theory” with the “practical realities” of working with parishes and people in transition. I am indebted to the following parishes with which I have worked directly as an Interim Pastor: the Church of the Incarnation, Oakville, St. Stephen’s Hornby , St. John’s, Stewarttown (where I had the pleasure of serving twice), the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Hamilton, the Church of the Epiphany, Oakville, Grace Church, Waterdown, and St. Paul’s, Norval.

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(continued)**

The oversight of Interim Ministry is now carried out by the Episcopal Office.

Although I have set aside my work with Interims, one part of my “former hat” that I continue to work is the administration of the Diocesan **Fresh Start** program.

Fresh Start, designed originally a programme for healthy ministry transition, was created originally by the Episcopal Church. Over the past nine years it has undergone several transformations. Fresh Start’s reinventions include one “re-write” in collaboration with the Anglican Church of Canada and later there was a more complex revision in 2008. We have worked to keep Fresh Start “fresh”, especially since some clergy have participated in the program several times. Fresh Start continues to serve clergy and congregations in transition in the Diocese of Niagara.

In the past year, a group of six parishes have “graduated” from the Fresh Start programme. Three clergy and their congregations are currently in the final phase of the program. Seven clergy the congregations they serve are about to commence their work with Fresh Start in November 2011.

This year, we especially thank the Reverend Jean Archbell, Ms. Ruth Anne Martin and the Reverend Sue Nicolls who have assisted in working with Fresh Start groups within in the Diocese of Niagara.

Respectfully Submitted,
The Reverend Canon Marni Nancekivell,
Secretary of Synod