



Introduction:

Many congregations in the Synod of Mid-America have benefited from the services of a Specialized Transitional Minister (STM) who has guided them through the transition between pastors. The aptitude, training and skills of the STM are designed to help the congregation move forward on a defined agenda which facilitates increased health, vitality and readiness to proceed into the next phase of its ministry with new pastoral leadership.

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

Policies affecting Specialized Transitional Ministry in the Synod of Mid-America

Foundational Statements from the RCA *Book of Church Order* which apply to Specialized Transitional Ministry.

Steps for a Church to move through to consider and obtain the services of a Specialized Transitional Minister and a Church Request for a Specialized Transitional Minister form.

Steps for a Minister to move through to become a Specialized Transitional Minister.

A Standard Contract for Specialized Transitional Ministry

Evaluation Forms for transitional ministers.

Only the first section regarding "Policies ..." is intended to be mandated. It is authoritative in each Classis as adopted by that Classis.

Other sections of this document may not have the force of "policy" but should be considered "standard operating procedures" which will provide fairness and good order as quality transitional ministry is provided in this synod.

Coordination of the Specialized Transitional Ministry in the Regional Synod of Mid-America:

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Section 1:

Policies affecting Specialized Transitional Ministry in the Regional Synod of Mid-America.

A Classis shall approve the contract between one of its churches and a Specialized Transitional Minister (STM) who has been registered as qualified by the General Synod and/or the Regional 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.

The Classis may permit the STM to preside at meetings of the consistory if invited to do so, but the STM shall not have the right to vote. The STM does not replace the Classis appointed supervisor nor may the STM serve as the Classis Supervisor. (Notice: This is more restrictive than the Book of Church Order.)

After seeking the advice of the congregation, the selection of a STM 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 STM in that particular congregation. A clear and specific contract will be signed by the STM, the church and the Classis of jurisdiction. A copy of this contract will be filed with the Classis, the Regional Synod of Mid-America (RSMA) and the RCA Ministry Services office. The Standard Transitional Ministry Contract will be used. (See Section 5.)

The Classis may strongly urge or require that a church under its general supervision contract with a STM. 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.)

A non-endorsed minister may be employed as a minister under contract (MUC) and as such is regulated by the appropriate BCO requirements (Part II, Art. 7, Sec. 4&5., p. 32).

At the request of the Consistory the STM may be a resource and/or advisor to the search process. The nature of this responsibility should be addressed in the STM contract. It is important that all parties understand that the STM shall not be permitted to be called to fill the pastoral vacancy in the church s/he serves.

If the STM does not have another assignment when his/her present contract concludes, via completion of its term or 30 day notification by the church, the following provisions apply: The RCA congregation that was most recently served by the STM will provide at least one month of salary and benefits during this down time.

If the RCA congregation is unable to meet this provision, the Classis of jurisdiction and the RSMA will provide equal shares of financial assistance if the request of the church is valid. If the STM is a member of a Classis within the Regional Synod of Mid-America and if the STM continues without opportunity for service after one month, the Classis in which the STM is serving and the regional synod will provide equal shares of one-half of the STM salary plus the full cost of the RCA insurance for months two and three.

If the STM has terminated the contract, this down time provision does not apply.

A STM is expected to increase his/her competency in conflict and crisis management and organizational development, meet with STM colleagues regularly, and maintain contact with his/her Classis of jurisdiction and the RSMA.

The STM will report to the Classis concerning the progress of the transitional 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 transitional 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 Classis and to the RSMA.

The STM is encouraged to become a member of the Classis of which he/she serves.

Section 2:

Foundation Statements from the *RCA Book of Church Order* which apply to Specialized Transitional Ministry.

The *RCA Book of Church Order* (Part II, Article 7, Section 3-6, p. 32) mandates that have a bearing on STM 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. 4: The Classis, at the request of the church or with its consent, shall appoint one of its ministers or a minister of another Classis, or of another approved body, the minister under contract of a church that is without an installed minister. The appointment shall be for a term of not more than one year. It shall be subject to renewal after proper review. The minister under contract shall perform the duties and receive the financial support which is agreed upon and shall report to Classis whenever that body shall require it.

Sec. 5: The Classis shall determine whether a minister under contract who is also a member of the Classis shall be appointed supervisor of the church served. The minister under contract shall preside at meetings of the consistory of the church if invited by the consistory to do so, but shall not have the right to vote.

Sec. 6: The Classis, at the request of the church or with its consent may appoint a specialized Interim (Transitional) Minister to serve that church between installed ministers, subject to the provisions of Sections 4 and 5, provided the minister has been endorsed as qualified by the General Synod or its designated agent.

Section 3a:

Suggested Steps for a Church to move through to consider and obtain the services of a Specialized Transitional Minister.

____ 1. When a pastoral vacancy is imminent, that congregation's vice president or departing pastor needs to notify the appropriate Classis committee Chairperson.

____ 2. The Classis committee Chairperson is then to:

____ a. notify the appropriate Classis committee which will see that a supervisor is appointed for the church.

____ b. inform the church's Vice-President of Consistory about Specialized Transitional Ministry (STM).

____ c. ask the Synod to send the church the appropriate information regarding STM.

____ d. advise the church to appoint a short term Transition Committee.

____ 3. The Transition Committee or the Consistory itself 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 STM.

(Note: A Pastoral Search Committee should not be appointed until a STM is in place.)

____ 4. The Classis 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 STM candidates and the necessity of writing a STM contract which will require Classis approval.

____c. in certain circumstances strongly urge or even require a church to engage the services of a STM. 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 STM:

____a. Complete the Church Request for an Transitional Minister form and send it to the Synod.

____b. The Synod, in conjunction with the Classis, will recommend all STM candidates to meet that congregation's needs and will send appropriate profiles to the Classis Supervisor.

____c. Evaluate the candidates, checking references and perhaps listening to him/her preach.

____d. Interview candidates and make a selection with counsel from their supervisor.

____e. Using the Standard STM Contract form, negotiate a contract that is acceptable to the church, the candidate and the Classis. The supervisor will assist with this process.

____f. Obtain the approval of the appropriate Classis committee of both the candidate and the contract.

____g. Before the STM begins his/her work, fully inform the congregation about the purpose of STM and about their STM 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 STM ministry.

____6. The STM, 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 Transitional Ministry Evaluation Forms furnished by the Synod's office.

____c. understand that the Classis supervisor is to moderate any consistory discussions regarding termination or extension of the STM contract. The supervisor will also preside at all congregational meetings pertaining to the call of a new pastor.

(Note: The STM will not replace and may not serve as the Classis supervisor.)

Section 3b:
Church Request for a Specialized Transitional Minister

Church _____ Classis _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Church Contact Person _____

Address _____

Work Phone _____ Home Phone _____

Classis Supervisor _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Date of this request _____

List Your Church's Paid Staff - Full Time (FT) / Part Time (PT) - and their position:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Previous Pastor _____ Number of yrs. at Church _____

Reasons church is requesting Interim Ministry _____

Issues your church may be dealing with or needs to deal with _____

Worship service times _____

Average attendance at each worship service _____

Preferred style of worship _____

Qualities or skills desired in an interim minister _____

Preferred interim contract will begin about _____ (date) and conclude about _____ (date)

Do you have a parsonage available to the interim? _____. If not, do you have

other housing available if needed? _____

We are willing to abide by the Specialized Interim Ministry policies of our regional synod and our classis.

Signed: _____ Office: _____

Synod use only:

Interim Candidates recommended

(date profile sent) _____

Section 4:
Steps for a Minister to move through to become a
Specialized Transitional Minister.

Candidates need to consult with both the Regional Synod and the RCA Ministry Services office.

Candidates must obtain a letter of endorsement from their Classis Executive Committee which is to be sent to the Synod and to the RCA Ministry Services office.

Candidates must be interviewed and approved by the Synod and recommended to Ministry Services. The decision on STM candidacy will be based on personal qualifications and the perceived need for additional STMs in the Synod of Mid-America.

A candidate may receive provisional endorsement from the Synod 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.

Candidates must complete the necessary interim training provided by the *Interim Ministry Network* and must ultimately receive their certification.
(<http://www.imnedu.org/>)

Candidates must receive final endorsement from Ministry Services.

Endorsed candidates are expected to attend quarterly meetings for support, training and networking. They should also seek out additional training periodically to enhance their insight and skills.

Section 5:
Standard Specialized Transitional Minister Contract

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 Transitional Minister (STM) does not have another assignment when this
contract concludes, via completion of its term or 30 day notification by the church, the church
is required to provide up at least one month of salary and benefits during this down time. If
the congregation is unable to meet this provision, the church will apply to the Classis of
_____ and the Regional Synod of Mid-America which will provide equal
shares of financial assistance if the request of the church is valid. If the STM continues without
opportunity for service after one month, the classis in which the STM is serving and the
regional synod will provide equal shares of one-half of the STM salary plus the full cost of the
RCA insurance for months two and three.

If the STM terminates this contract, this down time provision does not apply.

The SIM shall not be considered as a candidate for a call to this church.

STM Responsibilities:

Will provide normal pastoral and administrative leadership during the interim period.

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.

Will work with church leaders to accomplish these five developmental interim tasks:

Learning from our congregation's history.

Clarifying our identity and mission as we focus on our next chapter.

Facilitating leadership shifts.

Strengthening ties to the Classis.

Preparing for a new pastor.

Will ____ Will not ____ be a resource and/or advisor in the search process: The nature of this responsibility will be: _____

Will submit the required reports as outlined in the RSMA STM policy.

Additional Responsibilities or Explanations of the above Responsibilities:

The STM 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 STM. The Classis will provide a supervisor to work with the consistory and the transitional minister. The STM will not replace or serve as the Classis Supervisor. The STM, 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:

Cash Salary of \$_____ per month.

Housing Allowance of \$_____ per month.

Accountable Business Expenses of \$_____ per contract term, OR car allowance of \$_____ per mile or actual expenses as outlined in Classis requirements.

RCA 403(b) and Insurances as per Classis requirements.

Social Security reimbursement of \$_____ per month as per Classis requirements.

Professional Development of \$_____ per contract term and _____ week(s) as outlined in Classis requirements.

_____ weeks vacation.

Additional Salary/Benefit Considerations:

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

Additional Agreements:

SIGNATURES:

_____ Vice President of Consistory	_____ Date	_____ Specialized Transitional Minister	_____ Date
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_____ Classis Supervisor	_____ Date	_____ Stated Clerk of Classis	_____ Date
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(Copy of contract given to church, STM, classis, and the RSMA.)

Section 6:
Evaluation forms for transitional ministry.

Transitional Ministry Three Month Evaluation

Church: _____

To be completed by the Classis Supervisor in conversation with the Consistory and to be discussed with the transitional minister.

1. To what extent is the STM meeting the expectations of the congregation as outlined in the contract? _____

What areas need improvement? _____

2. What progress has been made on the STMs 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 STM 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 STM 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.

Transitional Minister _____

Date _____

Classis Supervisor _____

Date _____

Vice-President of Consistory _____

Date _____

Send a copy of this to the Regional Synod of Mid-America, P.O. Box 2147, Valparaiso, IN 46384 and to the chair of the appropriate Classis committee.

Transitional Ministry Six Month Evaluation

Church: _____

To be completed by the Classis Supervisor in conversation with the Consistory and to be discussed with the transitional minister.

1. To what extent is the STM meeting the expectations of the congregation as outlined in the contract? _____

What areas need improvement? _____

2. How helpful has the STM been in:

Preaching? _____

Pastoral Care? _____

Administration? _____

3. What progress has been made on the STMs 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 STM relating to this process? _____

6. What will need special attention during the next three months? _____

7. Has the STM 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.

Transitional Minister _____ Date _____

Classis Supervisor _____ Date _____

Vice-President of Consistory _____ Date _____

Send a copy of this to the Regional Synod of Mid-America, P.O. Box 2147, Valparaiso, IN 46384 and to the chair of the appropriate Classis committee.

Transitional Ministry Concluding Evaluation

Church: _____

To be completed by the Classis Supervisor and to be discussed with the Consistory and the Transitional Minister.

1. What was the duration of this transitional assignment? _____

Was that too brief, too long, just right? _____

2. Were the contractual agreements of the church to the STM and the STM to the church satisfied? _____

If not, in what way? _____

3. To what extent did the gifts, passions and priorities of this STM fit this church situation? _____

4. What are the strengths of this STM? _____

5. In what areas does this STM need to grow? _____

6. To what extent did the STM prepare this congregation for a new pastor? _____

7. Did the interim complete a final written report outlining the assessment process and the search process 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 copy of this to the Regional Synod of Mid-America, P.O. Box 2147, Valparaiso, IN 46384 and to the chair of the appropriate committee of your Classis.