

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 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 Regional 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.

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.

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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 deemed 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 twelve months. The contract may be renewed in increments of three months, up to a total of eighteen months of service. Contracts may be terminated by either party with thirty 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 and the Regional Synod of Mid-America (RSMA). 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 an 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..." *2019 BCO, Part II, Art. 2, Sec. 2, p. 29.*)

A non-endorsed minister may be employed as a minister under contract (MUC) and as such is regulated by the appropriate BCO requirements (*2019 BCO Part II, Art. 7, Sec. 4&5., p. 34*).

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 thirty 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 bounds of 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.

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 and six month intervals and at the conclusion of the assignment. The classis supervisor will initiate an evaluation of the transitional ministry at three and six 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 *2019 RCA Book of Church Order (Part II, Article 7, Section 3-6, p. 34-35)* mandates that have a bearing on STM policy:

Sec. 3: The classis shall appoint a minister as supervisor of all proceedings of the consistory of a church without an installed minister. If the minister to be appointed as supervisor is a member of another classis, then the classis shall consult with the minister's classis of membership prior to making such appointment. The classis shall determine the appropriate responsibilities for the supervisor.

Sec. 4: The classis, at the request of a 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 by the classis. 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 a church or with its consent, may appoint a specialized transition 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 3: 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 RSMA 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. 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.
 - ____b. Evaluate the candidates, checking references and perhaps listening to him/her preach.
 - ____c. Interview candidates and make a selection with counsel from their supervisor.

____d. 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.

____e. Obtain the approval of the appropriate classis committee of both the candidate and the contract.

____f. 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.)

____g. 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 found in this handbook.

____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 4: 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 Specialized
Transitional Ministry and 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 thirty 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 thirty 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.

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

The STM 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 transitional 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

Classis Supervisor Date

Stated Clerk of Classis Date

(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 (or by email to chad@rsmam.org) 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 (or by email to chad@rsmam.org) 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 (or by email to chad@rsmam.org) and to the chair of the appropriate committee of your Classis.