

Intentional Interims Needed

The Region's further development of strategies for ministering to churches in transition requires a steady supply of Intentional Interim Ministers. "Intentional" means that each interim pastor will work with church leaders and the Consultant for Transitional Ministries to help the congregation explore who they are and how they can become healthier and better equipped to reach their full kingdom potential. We are seeking people who feel called to ministering to congregations in transition and are trained to do so in line with our vision in Michigan of "Growing Healthy Churches."

In transitional ministry we are constantly learning and growing as we explore better ways to serve our churches. Therefore we are looking for interims to join our team who desire to learn and grow. We are also seeking interims that can be trusted with a high level of responsibility and authority, while being held accountable to our vision and the Consultant for Transitional Ministries.

As an Intentional Interim, you must be able to travel and at times be away from your home for 3-4 days per week. This is one of the challenges of being an interim, as the opportunities for interim ministry are rarely in your "back yard." We prefer Interim candidates who have a proven track record in some form of ministerial leadership; but will be open to those new to ministry upon a recommendation from an ABC pastor or Region staff. In addition, anyone who desires to serve as an interim must go through our training and/or be approved by the Consultant for Transitional Ministries. Our next "Introduction to Interim Ministry" training event will take place on **Thursday, March 13, 2008 at the Region office from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.** If you would like more information or wish to register for this training, please contact Rev. Tucker J. Gunneman at tgunneman@abc-mi.org, cell phone 586.219.3392 or Debbie Hart at the Region office at 800.632.2953 ext. 221 or dhart@abc-mi.org.

While each congregation is different and has different health issues, we are developing ways in which the interim can "seize the day" to help our churches:

- Discover how to move maintenance-focused ministry to missional-focused ministry
- Aid the congregation in discovering health issues to be addressed in preparation for calling new pastoral leadership
- Empower the leadership to address those health issues
- Prepare the congregation for new pastoral leadership
- Provide a caring ministry of healing for congregations who have said goodbye to their pastor

If these concepts excite you and you would be interested in joining our team or learning more, please contact the Consultant for Transitional Ministries, Rev. Tucker J. Gunneman at tgunneman@abc-mi.org or cell phone 586.219.3392.

"New Birth, Living Hope" – A Testimonial of a Church in Transition

First Baptist Church of Sault Ste. Marie is like many of the American Baptist Churches in Michigan, and in fact, like many churches in the U.S. It has been blessed by good pastoral leadership, but has also had some not so good pastoral leadership. It has experienced the ups and downs that many churches

experience. There have been times when they were growing; things were exciting, new people were joining, and kids and youth abounded. It has also experienced times when people were leaving either through death, moving to another church, or moving out of town. Through all of these ups and downs, the members continued to trust that God was with them and that things would change for the better.

The congregation has also been frustrated in recent years by not being able to reach new people and not knowing how or what they needed to change. These last few years have been particularly challenging. Despite efforts by the former pastor and current members, new people did not join, and the outlook was bleak. After their pastor resigned to move to another ministry setting, they invited the Consultant for Transitioning Ministries to meet with them to explore ways to turn things around. After a few meetings where they engaged an assessment process to discern their options, they realized that if things did not change soon, they would only have about five years before they would have to close their doors.

Convinced that God was not done with them yet, and that He had more ministry for them in their community, they voted to explore a plan to change their future. This plan, developed by the Consultant for Transitioning Ministries, calls for a complete rebirth of who they are, how they do ministry, and their priorities. It begins with a 6-9 month period where they prepare themselves to be a different church, and then a vote to begin a five year turn around plan. This plan is called the *New Birth, Living Hope Initiative*. It is an exciting journey of seeing God work in new and marvelous ways in the ministries of their church. It calls for:

- A deeper spiritual journey for your members and leaders
- A dependence and trust in God that will be stretching and exciting
- A new way of leading that is bold, strategic, and intentional
- Learning what God wants your church to be and do, and following it confidently
- New priorities that align with God's priorities for the church
- Creating new ministries for your church based on God's priorities
- Changing how you carry out these ministries of your church
- Discerning a new mission focus and setting a vision and goals to see it fulfilled

The plan requires that the leaders and members of the church be retrained in how they view the role of the church in their community, refocusing on God's priorities, and exercising a deep faith that God will lead them and give them success. Currently First Baptist Church is in the preparation stages of the Initiative, learning new things, and having their faith and assumptions about how to "do church" challenged. There is a growing excitement, and they are already seeing God work in small ways that confirm their conviction that He is still at work.

Because they are taking on a big challenge, they are requesting other ABC/MI churches to "adopt" them in prayer. If your church or a group in your church would like to adopt First Baptist Church of Sault Ste. Marie in prayer, please contact Rev. Tucker J. Gunneman, Consultant for Transitioning Ministries. As a prayer partner, you will receive a short newsletter with prayer requests and reports on how God is answering. You will not be asked to financially support this church; they are only asking that you pray for them.

Leading a church to effectively reach its community for Christ is a challenging adventure in these times. It calls for bold leadership, strategic planning, and a strong dependence and trust in God. If their adventure sounds exciting to you and you would like to know more about it, or to discover how your church can explore the *New Birth, Living Hope Initiative*, please contact Rev. Gunneman at 586.219.3392, or tgunneman@abc-mi.org.