

Continuing Education Plan (CEP) – September 2021

Submitted by Rev. Barbara Groote

My name is Rev. Barbara Groote. Currently I work as a certified Interim Pastor at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Spruce Grove, AB.

When I left my first call in December 2019, I did not expect to be off work for one year. And yet 2020 turned out to be a full, mind-opening, and renewing year for me. I took a few online university courses. But one thing I had an eye on for a while already, and that I finally had the time to explore deeper, was the training to become an Interim Pastor. And it's been a blessing to have Continuing Education funds that covered the full tuition! The process to access the funds was straightforward and fast.

I chose *Interim Ministry Network* (IMN) - a "group of inter-faith religious leaders" (<https://imnedu.org/#>) whose goal it is to train leaders in the church to teach and guide congregations in transition.

The training was comprised of three units. In the first unit, we focused on the work of the leader. The second unit built on the first by focusing on the work of the congregation, including the history, leadership, mission, connections, and the future of the community. My training concluded with a field-work unit.

Throughout the course, readings and daily homework were required, as well as additional paperwork between the units. But overall, it was worth every page, and every minute!

What I appreciated about IMN was that it did not offer a one-fits-all plan. Instead, it introduced a great variety of tools and principles which enable the Interim to tailor a plan for a community's context.

Another great benefit of the training was our fieldwork cohort (I was the only Canadian). We continue to meet monthly for mutual support and the exchange of ideas.

Together with Rev. Janet Kostyna (MB) we are in the process of starting a Canadian Interim cohort (ELCIC-IC) for the four Western synods, to build a network of certified Interim Pastors in the ELCIC context.

Often, the role of an Interim Pastor is understood to be that of a placeholder until a new pastor is found. However, while the "Settled" Pastor is comparable to a GP, the Interim Pastor is specialized in transitions. And - when properly established - this could mean that the Interim would be working together with congregational leaders and the

congregation through grief or conflict, toward a sense of direction and more clarity about congregational identity and mission focus.

The Interim, when understood as an integral part of the Church team, is a great asset for congregations who are interested in moving forward, and for the "Settled" Pastor leaving, and/or entering a new call.

My interim ministry training has put me on a different path as an ordained minister. The training has helped to shape my ministry and identity as a pastor. I feel called by God into this direction, and I have a renewed sense of call.