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HOW LEADERS ARE SHAPED FOR TRANSITIONAL MINISTRY:
AN EXPLORATION OF PASTORAL FORMATION AMONG US PRESBYTERIAN
SHORT-TERM TRANSITIONAL PASTORS

BY

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A Written Project submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

2023

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With Gratitude.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to all who answer the call to transitional
leadership in the church.

ABSTRACT

HOW LEADERS ARE SHAPED FOR TRANSITIONAL MINISTRY: AN EXPLORATION OF PASTORAL FORMATION AMONG US PRESBYTERIAN SHORT-TERM TRANSITIONAL PASTORS

Jackson Monson, Shari L., DMin Seattle University, 2023. 149 pp.
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This study focused on practical issues of pastoral formation among practitioners who lead short-term transitional ministry today. It utilized a survey tool and interviews to enhance the understanding of how the training and post-training practices of these pastors shaped their vocational ministry. Findings in this research aimed to report what draws, sustains, and supports pastors in this work.

This study listened to pastors with transitional ministry experience by inviting them to share feedback about their formation through training to discover what forms of support are most beneficial. From them this study aimed to uncover what might be helpful or encourage vocational sustainability.

Five research questions guided this study: (1) How likely are pastors with transitional ministry experience to seek calls as transitional pastors? (2) What draws leaders to transitional ministry in congregations? (3) How satisfied are they with the transitional ministry training? (4) What, if anything, would they change about training? (5) Which type of post-training support is most beneficial and what forms of support are difficult to find?

These questions are not easily answered. But church leaders want to know about pastors' lived experience because the church needs transitional pastors, and pastors with this specialization are increasingly hard to find.

Nearly 90 clergy from various Protestant traditions participated in the study. Two thirds were Presbyterian pastors. Feedback about transitional ministry training was generally positive. If one change were made it would be to include time during training to discuss with faculty points of practical application unique to the pastors' particular contexts. Findings on how to support pastors in this work focused on the impact of transitional ministry training; informal relationships with mentors, peers and friends; formal relationships with helping professionals such as leadership coaches; spiritual directors and facilitated peer groups; and the support desired from mid councils and national offices of the church.

The researcher's work with the data gathered from the survey and follow up interviews informed a storyline of short-term transitional ministry practice. It revealed that pastors come to transitional ministry for a variety of reasons, but they stay because of a sense of calling and a community of colleagues that support them in this work. They can feel like second-class citizens, especially when there is a gap in employment. New models of support are needed and should be explored.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

DEDICATION iv

ABSTRACT v

TABLE OF CONTENTS vi

LIST OF TABLES xi

LIST OF FIGURES xii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

 Introduction 1

 Statement of the Problem 3

 Purpose of the Study 4

 Reality: Facing Increasing Decline 4

 New Reality: Rise in Transitional Ministry 9

 What This Study Offers 13

 Role of the Researcher 14

 An Imaginative Meeting of Commission on Ministry of
 [N] Presbytery 15

 Conclusion 17

CHAPTER 2: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION.....	19
Introduction.....	19
Background of the Researcher	20
A Biblical Theology of Conversation Partners	23
A Practical Theology of Leadership Community	28
An Ecclesial Theology of Vocational Experience	32
Conclusion	34
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	36
Introduction and Overview	36
Getting Started	38
Online Survey Tool.....	42
Sample Population	45
Initial Coding and Analysis	46
Follow-up Interviews	47
Additional Coding.....	50
Validating the Data and Coding.....	51
Limitations and Delimitations.....	51
Conclusion	52

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	53
Introduction.....	53
Participant Demographics	56
Findings Based on Research Questions	57
Research Question One.....	57
Research Question Two	59
Research Question Three	61
Research Question Four	63
Research Question Five	65
Interview Findings and Themes.....	67
Emerging Core Categories and Themes	72
Analysis Leads to a Storyline	76
Findings About Menucha Training Site and Online TMWorkshops.....	81
Conclusions: Reflections and Ethical Considerations	83
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS	85
Introduction.....	85
New Models May Be Needed.....	86
Recommendations by Type of Support.....	89

Four Practical Pastoral Support Practices	94
Opportunities for Further Study	95
Reflections Drawn from the Study	98
Conclusions.....	98
An Imaginative Letter to Mid Council Leaders about Transitional Pastors.....	98
REFERENCES	104
APPENDIX A: Institutional Review Board Site	111
APPENDIX B: Site Permissions	113
APPENDIX C1: Survey Information Letters and Informed Consent.....	115
APPENDIX C2: Interview Information Letters and Informed Consent.....	118
APPENDIX C3: Blog Information and Informed Consent	121
APPENDIX D: Survey Questions	124
APPENDIX E: Survey Narrative Coding for Q14, Q30, and Q40.....	131
APPENDIX F: PCUSA Pastors Data Visualization Figures 1 through 9.....	133
APPENDIX G: Survey Questions with Responses and Analysis.....	137
APPENDIX H: Chart of Participants: PC(USA) Pastors	148

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 <i>Researcher Roles in Transitional Ministry</i>	21
Table 2.2 <i>My Rule of Life</i>	31
Table 3.1 <i>Themes from 2019 Pastors Gathering</i>	40
Table 3.2 <i>Survey Questions about Training</i>	44
Table 3.3 <i>Phone Interview Worksheet</i>	48
Table 3.4 <i>Chart of Participants in Phone Interviews</i>	49
Table 4.1 <i>How Likely Are Pastors with Transitional Ministry Training to Serve as Transitional Pastors?</i>	59
Table 4.2 <i>What Draws Presbyterian Ministers to Serve in Transitional Ministry?</i>	60
Table 4.3 <i>Third Phone Interview Research Worksheet</i>	68
Table 4.4 <i>Nine Forms of Support Identified by Study Participants</i>	70
Table 4.5 <i>Fourth Interview Worksheet with Analytical Codes</i>	71
Table 4.6 <i>Twenty Analytical Codes from Survey Q14 30 40 and Interviews</i>	72
Table 4.7 <i>Interviews Thirteen categories</i>	73
Table 4.8 <i>Four Core Categories of Support Non-Support Sense of Call Positive or Negative</i>	78
Table 4.9 <i>Five Types of Support for Presbyterian Pastors</i>	79
Table 4.10 <i>How Satisfied Are Presbyterian Ministers with Menucha / TMWorkshops</i>	83

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Five Million Fewer Mainline Protestants than in 20075

Figure 2. The Developmental Tasks of Intentional Interim Ministry33

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Too often we are looking for the wrong kind of leadership. We call someone with answers, decision, strength, and a map for the future, someone who knows where we ought to be going...we should be calling for leadership that will challenge us to face the problems for which there are no simple, painless solutions - the problems that require us to learn new ways.

– Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*

Introduction

The mainline Protestant church in the United States is growing older, smaller, and—by traditional measures—less vital. Fewer people occupy church pews on Sunday mornings; and, as church membership is declining, the average age of those members is rising. While the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020 disrupted church life, it is important to keep in mind that these trends began decades prior to that (Pew Research Center 2014). The fastest growing category of faith adherence in the United States is those with no religious affiliation (Smith 2021). The church at the center of a town square is no longer the anchor of public life it once was.

Trends like these invite the church to think about its future. It is inevitable that more churches will close their doors. This raises the question, what can be done to help churches reckon with current realities? Who will step into leadership roles with a willingness to guide the hard conversations that need facilitating? From whom do these leaders learn to define reality and what can they do to help us learn new ways of being a church? This study introduces vital curiosity about the formation of a particular type of leader: the pastor drawn to transitional ministry, especially short-term transitional ministry.

Church leaders far and wide are asking: Who is poised to help us learn new ways? Who has the skills to help us adapt to today's realities? Who knows how to calmly speak the truth with love in such a way that congregations might choose to adapt or continue to decline and eventually close their doors? Moving beyond simply who will do the work, the church must also ask: What training and support do effective leaders need to help the church shape a more hopeful future? This study aims to identify the essential skills and sensitivities needed in those willing to do this future-shaping work.

“Transitional ministry” is a term used by the church to describe the occurrence of a significant shift or change, which may transpire in the short or long term, be personnel driven, or relate to doctrinal practice. Sometimes the shift takes place in the culture of an organization. An example of this might be a commitment to greater diversity, equity, and inclusion. Sometimes the shift emerges in the mission of the church in recognition of a changing ministry context. The shift may be from one leader to another leader: for example, the retirement of a long tenured pastor and the eventual calling of a new pastor or pastoral team. A new ministry model presents a shift, as does a reworked economic model or a decision to end or close the ministry.

Today, transitional ministry is pervasive as multiple and dramatic shifts occur throughout the Christian church. Transitional ministry takes place at all levels of the church; thus, all leaders need training and support to engage and lead in the context of dramatic change in the religious landscape.

A clergy leader with training and skills in transitional ministry is referred to as a transitional pastor. Pastors with transitional ministry experience understand the importance of assessing and wisely interpreting the changing dynamics in the life of a

congregation. These leaders know there are no quick fixes (Sacks 2015, 3). Transitional leaders are characteristically entrepreneurial and curious about the future. They are trustworthy guides in leading change (Faith Communities Today 2021, 28) and utilize adaptive leadership skills, which means they embrace change and are open to trying new things and learning from failures. They tend to know the value of a community of peers and advisors.

Today, pastors with transitional ministry experience may serve the church in installed or short-term roles (traditionally called interim roles), with some clergy choosing to specialize in short-term transitional ministry. For the purposes of this study, the term transitional pastor is used to refer to all pastors leading change in the church. The change may be adaptive involving learning new ways to be the church, or the change may be receptive of the realities of decline and the adjustments necessary to prepare for eventual closing. The term short-term transitional pastor is used to refer to pastors who specialize in leading change during an intense, typically shorter period often associated with an anticipated change of leadership. Sometimes a short-term transitional pastor's work is to assess the viability of a congregation and possibly close a church. Unfortunately, pastors with the necessary leadership skills and experience to succeed in short term transitional ministry are increasingly hard to find (Bendroth 2015, 197; Craker 2021, 13; Krummel 2019; Radak 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Although there is no shortage of congregations in need of broad transitional ministry leadership, there is a shortage of pastors willing to do this work in short-term contexts. The church does not know what to do about this problem. Are pastors reluctant

because of inadequate training? Is the church simply ill equipped to support their work? Are incentives not enticing enough or compensation too low? Conversely, what attracts those who are drawn to this work? What might be done to encourage more pastors to accept short-term roles to lead congregations through significant change?

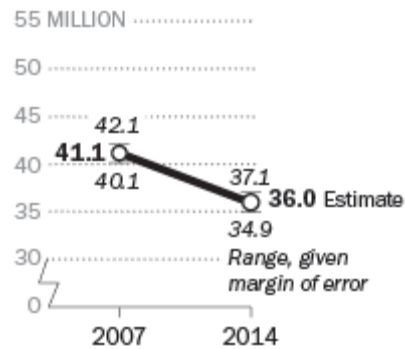
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover what today's pastor needs to sustain a vocation in the transitional ministry subspecialty of short-term transitional ministry. The researcher sought to understand pastors' experiences with the training they receive during formation and the various forms of ministry support they find beneficial. This study also aimed to learn what practices best prepare pastors for short-term transitional ministry and encourage their vocational longevity. The researcher anticipated that listening to the voices of the study participants might shed light on the current shortage of pastors willing to work in short-term ministry contexts.

Reality: Facing Increasing Decline

According to Gallup, in 2020 for the first time ever, fewer than half of Americans—47%—were members of a church, synagogue, or mosque (Jones 2021). Mainline Protestant churches, with deep roots in American history, have been in steady decline for decades. These include Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and the Disciples or Churches of Christ. In 2015, Pew Research Center reported that the percentage of Americans with mainline affiliation had dropped to 14.7, down from 18.1 percent in 2007, despite overall growth in the US population.

Five Million Fewer Mainline Protestant Adults Than in 2007



Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 1. Five Million Fewer Mainline Protestants than in 2007. From Pew Research Center, 2014.

Figure 1 illustrates the decline of nearly five million, which can be explained in part by generational change in the makeup of mainline churches. For example, not only are there fewer members in mainline Protestant churches, but their median age is increasing (Pew Research Center 2014).

Data from the Presbyterian Church USA (Pew Research Center 2014) breaks down this trend in generational change. In 2007, adults 65 or older comprised 27 percent of Presbyterian membership. In 2014, that number grew to 39 percent. A significant shift is also evident in those aged 30-45, an age group that shrank from 29 percent in 2007 to 18 percent in 2014. Not only are there fewer adults identifying as Presbyterian, but they are trending older.

The PC(USA) is increasingly comprised of smaller churches and is officiating fewer ordinations. Today, 76 percent of PC(USA) churches (6,789 congregations) have

fewer than 150 members (Office of the General Assembly 2021). Only one third (2,222) of these churches have pastors with full plan benefits, including medical, retirement pension, and disability coverage (Office of the General Assembly 2021). Many smaller congregations that find themselves in financial stress may want to call an installed minister—one who agrees to stay in their role for an indefinite period, or as long as the call endures—but simply cannot afford to do so. Graphs About Religion, a website hosted by Ryan Burge (2023), predicts that the PC(USA) will have less than 500,000 members by 2040. A bleak future indeed.

Most people agree that intergenerational fellowship in a church, regardless of size, is a key sign of a congregation’s vitality. What other issues matter? The Vital Congregations initiative of the PC(USA) offers resources for congregations to assess seven markers of vitality: (1) lifelong discipleship formation, (2) intentional authentic evangelism, (3) outward incarnational focus, (4) empowered servant leadership, (5) Spirit inspired worship, (6) caring relationships, and (7) ecclesial health. Upon completing the congregational assessment, churches are invited to discern if their way forward is to “reform, cluster with other churches, or revitalize by grace and gratitude in the death and legacy of a congregation” (Office of Vital Congregations 2020, 30). With the help of the national program staff and a supportive presbytery, pastors and lay leaders guide this program in local congregations.

Recognizing the need to expand the number of calls and the number of candidates for the long-term vitality of congregations, the Board of Pensions of the PC(USA) initiated an incentive program in 2018 to bring younger ministers into the plan with full benefits (Board of Pensions 2021). Another vitality program offered by the PC(USA) is

Healthy Pastors, Healthy Congregations, which offers a financial assessment of congregational health and assistance with debt relief and retirement savings to pastors.

The PC(USA) knows how to study a problem like a lack of vitality and how to incentivize a programmatic response. If these programs yield the anticipated results, the number of younger pastors in installed positions will grow. Pastors will have less debt and more retirement savings. Congregations will have a better sense of what they need to accomplish for a more vital future. The question remains: Do programs like these do enough? If pastors were to answer, what might they add to our understanding of ministry today?

According to the Religion News Service (2022), most pastors cite 2020 or 2021 as their worst year in ministry ever. Adjusting to new technologies meant learning new ways to do their jobs. Roughly 40 percent of pastors report having received a rise in requests to meet social needs like hunger and housing. Pre-COVID, church members volunteered to help address these needs, but the pandemic brought a steep decline in volunteering. Additionally, 15 percent of churches report having made a reduction in staff, and 75 percent report conflicts having arisen from how they handled COVID precautions like closing or reopening the church building, requiring or not requiring masking, and encouraging or discouraging vaccinations.

Recent polls by Barna Group asked pastors, “In the last year, have you given real, serious consideration to quitting being in full-time ministry?” Forty-two percent of Protestant pastors said yes, up from 38 percent in October 2021 and 29 percent in January 2021. (Barna Group 2022). In mainline churches, the percentage was 53.

Churches struggling before the pandemic tended to face greater challenges during it. Likewise, even before the pandemic, pastors who thought most about leaving the ministry led declining churches of 100-250 Sunday attendees.

The sharp divisions in America's national politics and public discourse have heightened incivility not only in the public square but also among the faithful in congregations (Warren 2022). According to the 2022 Barna poll, clergy who had considered quitting ranked "current political divisions" as their third highest ministry challenge at 38 percent, and those who had not considered quitting ranked it second at 32 percent. Also topping the list of most challenging issues for those in a full-time pastorate were feeling lonely and isolated, experiencing steady decline in the church, lacking optimism about the future of the church, and being unhappy about the effect of the pastoral role on their family (Barna Group 2022). The single greatest challenge reported by pastors was "the immense stress of the job" (Barna Group 2022).

While statistics show that fewer people are going to church, the recent surge in worship services offered online during the pandemic boosted church attendance. When Barna Group (2022) asked people from diverse Christian traditions who attended church pre-COVID to describe their church attendance during the pandemic, 61 percent reported that they attended the same church, 23 percent reported that they either moved churches or attended multiple ones, and 16 percent said they stopped attending church. Despite all the disruptions of 2020, the opportunity of online worship actually helped boost attendance across all generations. The year 2021 saw declining numbers in overall church attendance; however, the survey found church attendance for younger generations to be increasing.

The American religious landscape is undergoing multiple shifts. Today when pastors stand before congregations, they do so with the knowledge that this generation of congregants is shaping a new era of church life. Empty pews do not necessarily mean few people are engaged in church life. Gone are the days when attending church online was mostly for the aged or infirm. Pandemic practices have ushered in new behaviors as well as new possibilities for church vitality. The church is demonstrating its ability and willingness to change.

New Reality: Rise in Transitional Ministry

The challenges of the pandemic will be overcome by the resiliency of those who stay in pastoral ministry. Pastors are turning to transitional ministry training to help address these challenges. Transitional ministry is broadly concerned with engaging and leading change in a congregation. It can be described as a process of change that takes place when church leaders focus on a new way forward, stay engaged with those they are leading, communicate and graciously receive feedback, and accept responsibility for success (and failure). The type of transition work a congregation chooses may lead it to reform its ministry focus, merge with another entity, or close and possibly reopen as something new or transformed. The timeframe may be short or long depending on the congregation's vitality, time horizon, and resources. Sometimes a transitional leader who begins in a short-term role may stay on and become the congregation's next installed pastor.

The crucial areas of knowledge for transitional ministry include integration of family systems theory; adaptive change; change dynamics, conflict management and orchestration; defining reality, neighborhood analysis; and understanding and moving

beyond a mindset which centers the white experience as normative for the church. Sensitivities important to transitional ministry include showing love for the people by asking questions and listening, building and earning trust, expressing genuine curiosity, navigating complexity and uncertainty, and being open minded (Lee 2023, 141). Again, transitional ministry takes place at all levels of the church; thus, all leaders need training and support to engage and lead change.

Pastors seeking training in transitional ministry typically complete two weeks of training. The first week is designed for leaders learning the basic foundations of transitional ministry. The second week mines deeper into the theoretical and theological concepts of managing congregational change and is best suited for pastors with some prior experience leading change. This training format is offered through the Transitional Ministry Consortium comprising eleven training sites around the United States. Not all eleven training sites approach transitional ministry in the same way, however. Some distinctively focus on traditional interim work to prepare a congregation for the next pastor.

In 2015, three Presbyterian clergy with wide ranging experience in the church began to offer transitional ministry training in the Pacific Northwest at the Menucha Retreat Center in Corbett, Oregon. Revs. Scott Lumsden, Eliana Maxim, and Heidi Armstrong centered their training on engaging and leading deep change within congregations (Lumsden 2019, 2-4), which differed from other training sites' primary focus on managing the change of one pastor to another. From 2015-2019, the Menucha training took place on site in Oregon. In 2020, the training was moved online under a new

name: TMWorkshops. More than 300 church leaders from various backgrounds and traditions have received an introduction to transitional ministry from this team.

Transitional ministry is grounded in leader-led adaptive change that is concerned with engaging and leading transformative change. In such circumstances, pastoral leadership support is essential because there is so much to learn. Leaders learn by leading, reflecting, experimenting, succeeding, and failing, over and over again (Willimon 2002, 279). Leading adaptive change works best when pastors can build trustworthy relationships with others who can provide feedback and serve as sounding boards and guides. Studies show that leaders who do not build such relationships are likely to burn out and risk losing what is precious to them (Beavis 2014; Bolsinger 2015; Bolsinger 2020; Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky 2009, 273; Heifetz and Linksy 2002, 168; Olsen and Devor 2015, 58; Roach 2012). Scholarship on transitional ministry references three main categories of leadership support:

- One-to-one support, such as leadership coaching, spiritual direction, counseling therapy, and mentorship (Arendshorst 2010; Bittinger 2007; Brown 2018, 243; Chandler 2010; Hagan 2008; Hill 2001, 140; Meek 2003; Miles 2000)
- Support found in professional networks, groups facilitated by a professional or by peers, academic scholarship and programs including seminaries and universities, and training programs and faculty (Barton 2014, 93; Berry and Taylor 1990, 125; Bloom 2019, Bridges and Bridges 2016; Dotlich, Noel, and Walker 2004; Foltz-Morrison 2013; Oswald 1991, 135; Peterson 1992, 20)

- Judicatory support provided by regional entities, such as Presbyterian mid councils (presbyteries and synods) and other denominational structures and programs, such as pension and benefit programs (DuChene and Sundby 2022, Board of Pensions 2021; Research Services of the PC[USA] 2007).

Post-training support is offered in various forms, depending on one's religious tradition. In some traditions, transitional pastors receive appointments, periodic coaching, and invitations to clergy retreats (Osteen 2019). Support can be formal or informal, required, or voluntary. It can be offered by one's denominational leaders or programs or found on one's own.

Little is known about what it takes to equip and sustain a pastoral call to transitional ministry today. Much has been written and studied about the life of congregations during seasons of change; less is known about the pastors who guide them (Hagan 2008, 2).

The PC(USA) model of formation for pastors who are called on to serve churches during short-term pastoral leadership transition (also called intentional interim ministry), has remained largely unaltered since its inception more than fifty years ago (Bents 2004; Mead 2014, 91). Beyond requisite training, not much is known about what pastors need to help them apply their learning to their practice in short-term transitional ministry roles. It is in the best interest of the church in the United States to discover what transitional pastors need and to create conditions for them to thrive.

What This Study Offers

This study sought to determine if a common storyline exists about how transitional pastors are formed and sustained for transitional ministry. Pastors with transitional ministry experience were asked to reflect on their formation through training and leadership support. Their feedback on the following research topics guided this study's pursuit:

1. How likely are pastors with transitional ministry training to serve as transitional pastors?
2. What draws leaders to transitional ministry in congregations?
3. How satisfied are they with transitional ministry training?
4. What, if anything, would they change about training? and
5. Which type of post-training support is most beneficial, and what forms of support are difficult to find?

The study primarily examined the Menucha and TMWorkshops training opportunities offered in the Pacific Northwest from 2015 to 2020. However, it also included training at other sites across the United States, including Zephyr Point in Nevada, Montreat in North Carolina, and others mentioned with more detail in chapter 3.

Invitations to participate in an online survey were sent to nearly 300 leaders who took the training or expressed an interest in research about transitional ministry. Within three weeks of posting the survey, 89 responses were received. Most of the respondents were affiliated with the PC(USA).

When analysis of the survey indicated gaps in the data's clarity about post-training support, the researcher conducted phone interviews with a sampling of survey respondents. In total, nine phone interviews were conducted with PC(USA) pastors serving in transitional ministry and/or serving as mid council leaders.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher has served six congregations in three presbyteries over nine years and currently serves as a transitional mid council leader. Initially the researcher did not take transitional ministry training in the Pacific Northwest, as it was not offered at the time. However, she has participated in various trainings offered by TMWorkshops since that time and has served as an occasional seminar panelist.

The researcher has developed practices that help her sustain a supportive community through spiritual friendships, frequent connection with the mid council leaders where she has served, retreats with the Transforming Center 2019-2021, working with a leadership coach 2015-present, and building online relationships through blogging.

The role of the researcher in this study was to reflect theologically on the practice of transitional ministry, develop the online survey, conduct phone interviews, analyze the data, provide for an audit of the process, and employ a grounded theory approach to try to reveal a storyline that explains how leaders are shaped for transitional ministry in the PC(USA). The intent of the researcher was to discover how pastors with experience serving in short-term transitional ministry roles seek the support they need.

An Imaginative Meeting of the Commission on Ministry of [N] Presbytery

The following story of an imagined meeting of presbytery leaders is offered to illustrate how the practical issues of pastoral formation might surface in a real and similar setting:

The Commission on Ministry of [N] Presbytery was meeting online, as had become their custom a year into the pandemic. Nearing the end of a lengthy report on churches in need of pastors to lead a congregation through transitional ministry, the Executive Presbyter asked the more seasoned Stated Clerk, “why is it so hard for us to find Transitional Pastors?”

“Well...,” the Clerk replied aloud in a reflective tone, “there may be several reasons for the shortage we are experiencing, but I suspect the primary reason has to do with compensation.” The moderator quickly chimed in indicating that this shouldn't be the case because this presbytery requires churches to compensate transitional pastors within 5% of what their former pastor was paid. There must be more to it.

“I hear other presbyteries in our Synod are also having a hard time filling transitional ministry roles,” said the executive with a sigh. “Have you looked at the Synod jobs board recently? It is positively overflowing with posts about churches in need of pastors with transitional ministry training and experience to accept short-term calls. And my ecumenical colleagues say there is a shortage in their traditions as well.”

“Is the pandemic to blame for our troubles?” asked a relative newcomer to the team.

“I suppose in some measure COVID may be contributing to scarcity, but it is not the sole reason. In truth, we have been finding it increasingly challenging to find

transitional pastors willing to interview for openings for about a decade,” cited the clerk. A long pause ensued.

“If you have transitional ministry training,” the moderator asked, “hold up a hand. I want to see who knows what transitional ministry entails.” Two of twelve members of COM raised a hand. “Huh. That’s interesting. Tell us, why did each of you take the training?”

The first pastor to speak said, “I signed up for the training on the recommendation of someone in my preaching group. She told me that the training can open doors in retirement to meaningful short-time ministry gigs. But I’ll be honest,” the pastor added with a surprised tone in her voice, “I’m already using the training in my installed role. It’s fantastic. In my opinion, everyone here should take it.”

“But I thought that transitional ministry training was primarily for interim pastors,” said the minute taker to the team. “You know, the pastors who serve between the departure of one pastor, and the calling of the next pastor. Interim pastors. It’s been our practice for ages to require churches to call an interim pastor following the departure of a pastor.”

“Yes,” said the second pastor whose hand was raised. Lowering his hand, he took a deep breath and said, “I’m new to this team, so you may not know my story. In brief, my first call as a pastor was to serve a congregation between installed pastors. I was called an intentional interim pastor. That was ten years ago. At the time I thought of that call as a way to get started, while I waited for something better, like an installed call, come along.”

“But the funny thing is, I loved it! The training was good, and the work helped me grow as a leader. I took three interim calls in a row. Each one more challenging than the one prior. I would have been happy to do more intentional interim ministry, perhaps made a career of it. But I grew tired of the anxiety between calls. The uncertainty and frequent moves grew hard to manage. Just about the time vitality was returning to the congregation, and around the time I found my way into a pastor’s group I enjoyed, it was time for me to move on. I had hoped to specialize in this work. But it did not appear to be possible. At least not for me.”

The Zoom room grew quiet. It was nearly the time for adjournment. “I’d like to say one more thing before we close,” the lamenting pastor continued. “Like my colleague who first spoke up, in my current [installed] call, I too draw on my transitional ministry knowledge and skills. I wish all our pastors and presbytery staff had transitional ministry training. Perhaps eventually we might do so. But let’s not lose sight of the reality we are dealing with; transitional pastors willing to serve in short-term calls are increasingly hard to find. I wonder what we might do as COM to help?”

A chorus of “God help us” was heard. And with that, the meeting drew to a close.

Conclusion

This project recognizes that the mainline church in America is undergoing tremendous change and steepening decline. The church in this era needs pastors who understand how to lead change. Transitional ministry training offers a learning environment for clergy to explore how to do this work. The purpose of this project was to look at the impact of this training on pastors, the calls they take whether installed or short-term, and the support they need to lead congregations. Specifically, the study

focused on PC(USA) Presbyterian clergy with transitional ministry training. The study utilized a survey tool and interviews to explore two factors of pastoral formation: participants' satisfaction with transitional ministry training at one training site between 2015 and 2021 and their experience of post-training support. The project culminates with recommendations for pastors, congregations, and mid councils.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

We believe that real change takes place incrementally over time with others in the context of spiritual practices that open us to God's transforming work.

–The Transforming Center

Moses' story and the example of other religious communities calls us to at least consider moving beyond our culturally conditioned patterns of isolation, transience and independence to the richness and interdependence of a leadership community that is strong enough and stable enough to provide ongoing spiritual guidance for those whom we are leading.

–Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*

Introduction

This chapter highlights biblical and contemporary theologies supporting the exploration of the study's five research topics:

1. How likely are pastors with transitional ministry training to serve as transitional pastors?
2. What draws leaders to transitional ministry in congregations?
3. How satisfied are they with transitional ministry training?
4. What, if anything, would they change about training? and
5. Which type of post-training support is most beneficial, and what forms of support are difficult to find?

The chapter begins with the background of the researcher that led to an examination of three pastoral streams of thought, each informing the practice of transitional ministry. These streams are: (1) a biblical theology of conversation partners, (2) a practical theology of community, and (3) an ecclesial theology of vocational

experience. Together these pastoral theologies shaped the design and execution of this study.

Background of the Researcher

In keeping with the DMin approach of Seattle University, the researcher claimed the storied influences of her own vocational context, social experience, and faith tradition as the lens through which she viewed this project (Savage 2008, 74). I began my call to ordained ministry after nearly a dozen years leading missions work in a Presbyterian church and while attending seminary. My first ordained call in 2013 was to serve as an interim pastor. Today this role would be called a transitional pastor. All PC(USA) pastors are ordained, but some are not installed; this call was meant to be a place to start as I waited for an installed position to open. The aging congregation in the historic small town to which I was called could not have been more different from the intergenerational, suburban context where I had been serving. I felt surprisingly energized by and drawn to this ministry. Leading a congregation through a transition from one pastor to another was underway when I arrived, but a culture shift also began to take place and was successfully addressed. I enjoyed playing a role in making that happen. When an opportunity came to lead another congregation in similar short-term transitional work, I eagerly accepted the call. Nine years, three presbyteries, and six congregations later, my sense of call to this form of transitional ministry had blossomed into a vocational direction I had not anticipated.

The churches I have served in Washington varied in size, composition, and theological orientation. Table 2.1 shows the context, membership, and my role in each setting.

Table 2.1 Researcher Roles in Transitional Ministry

Ministry context	Membership	Researcher role
Small city	164	Intentional Interim Pastor
City	770	Intentional Interim Pastor
Urban	485	Intentional Interim Pastor
City	353	Intentional Interim Pastor
City	200	Short-term Transitional Pastor
SW Washington State	3,923	Transitional Executive Presbyter and Stated Clerk

In the first few churches I served, I followed the developmental tasks of intentional interim ministry taught in training: (1) come to terms with history, (2) discover new identity, (3) transition to new leadership, (4) renew relationship with mission partners, and (5) commit to new future & new leadership (Lumsden, 2015).

However, almost from the start, the challenges from the third church seemed beyond my abilities to manage. The established staff was ill-prepared, and the elders were overwhelmed. After a few months, I recommended hiring consultants to help, but I quickly learned that the elders and staff did not trust “outsiders.” Thankfully, I had gained the trust of the leadership, and out of necessity I built a team of advisors to mentor me as I guided the church. These advisors served as conversation partners with whom I could be honest when things grew difficult.

During this season of ministry, I met with a spiritual director, made frequent calls to presbytery leaders, endeavored to network with other pastors serving in similar contexts, started a blog where I reflected on my experience, worked with a leadership coach, and began to look to Scripture for examples of leadership transition. I was

delighted to connect with Titus's tenure on the island of Crete and other biblical leaders who led during seasons of transition. I longed to be part of a peer group of spiritual friends who shared an affinity for transitional ministry. I had heard of such groups but had not yet found one.

In the intervening years I led two more congregations through seasons of significant change, began this project, met with colleagues to explore whether we might collaborate in this research, and eventually found a small group to join. This group was part of a larger commitment I had made to join the Transforming Center series of nine retreats known as Transforming Community 16 (TC16). From January of 2019 through September 2021, I participated in five in-person and four online spiritual retreats with this community of approximately one hundred people. My small group within TC16 consisted of five people. Together we learned to hold space for one another to process our particular life experiences and ministries. I eventually came to see this practice as group spiritual direction. It was a transformative experience.

During the time I was involved with TC16, I served as a short-term transitional pastor to a church in Seattle and then a church in Olympia Presbytery, eventually becoming the Transitional Executive Presbyter of that presbytery. Amid these vocational changes and a global pandemic, I found my commitment to TC16 a sustaining factor in my life and ministry. I also continued to work with the leadership coach I had been in relationship with since 2017.

Despite engaging many forms of support, I felt something was missing—something essential to my well-being. It occurred to me that being part of a group of transitional pastors working together as a learning community might be satisfying. I tried

to constitute such a group around an action learning task, but it did not coalesce in a timely manner. I wondered, what do other short-term transitional pastors do to find support?

The question led me to look further for conversation partners. I hosted backyard barbecues, built a website, joined several online peer groups, and networked on social media. Those activities were worthwhile, but I wanted to know more about this form of ministry I was drawn to. That sustained longing spurred my academic interest in pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree where I could focus my curiosities. Heeding Creswell's (2016) recognition of extensive time in the field as a form of validity in qualitative research (34), I brought this experience to my theological reflection on short-term transitional ministry.

A Biblical Theology of Conversation Partners

A biblical theology of conversation partners offers deep wells of spiritual formation for transitional leaders. These include a shared life of prayer, the practice of vocational vulnerability with trusted mentors, and a commitment to engage with and listen to diverse voices within the church. An honest life of prayer is rooted in an intimacy with God in which a leader can say anything and everything their soul desires to be said, whether with words or in silence. This vulnerability also appears in a leader's vocational relationship with others, most especially with trusted mentors. Trusted mentoring relationships are built by conversations that take place over years. We see this throughout Scripture both directly and imaginatively.

A biblical theology of conversation partners includes practices of crying out to God when ministry is too much to bear alone, practices of vulnerability with mentors, and

a commitment to participating in intentional conversations with those who hold divergent views about living out the Gospel. The Hebrew prophet Moses represents a biblical mentor in the practice of crying out to God in moments of vocational anguish while the Apostle Paul and his co-worker Titus serve as mentors in the practice of vulnerability. Intentional conversations with those in the church who hold divergent points of view have been seen throughout church history in the councils of the church. This project considers the Council of Jerusalem account as a model for bringing diverse voices together as conversation partners to sort out disagreements and find a way forward. Conversations with God, mentors, and the wider church work best when one is deeply rooted in Christian community.

Three biblical texts offer insights about the value of conversation partners. In Numbers 11 (NRSV), Moses cries out to God in a moment of personal anguish, and his leadership is shaped significantly by this pursuit of God in the company of others. The Apostle Paul's leadership is likewise shaped through his network of church relationships. We see this in his endeavor to deploy a company of roughly 100 church workers to support this expanding mission of establishing churches. The early verses of the Pastoral Epistle to Titus (Titus 1) invite us to imagine conversations Paul may have had with his young coworker and with others committed to leadership in the early church. Imagine Titus inquiring of the Apostle Paul why he was given such a hard assignment in Crete (see Titus 1). Imagine, finally, those gathered at the council in Jerusalem grappling to discern what the Spirit was saying to the church. One of the outcomes of that council was to encourage diversity of experience in the church without forsaking unity (see Acts 15).

This is especially valuable when the church faces contentious conversations and needs to find a way forward.

Scholarship about Moses as a leader is rich and varied and has been drawn upon by diverse church traditions to inform transitional ministry (Beaumont 2011, 99; Rendle 1998; Richardson 1996; Sacks 2015; Schulz 1998, 126). Moses is remembered as a reluctant leader whom God used to gather a people around a new way of worship and community life. His recorded prayer life is rich with imagery as he intercedes and cries out to God on behalf of the people. Moses' reputation for being honest to God in his life of prayer helps us see his leadership in relatable ways.

Moses may be the Hebrew Scripture's preeminent transitional ministry leader. We learn from biblical accounts that he was born to Hebrew slaves and raised in the household of Egypt's Pharaoh. Made aware of the suffering of his people, Moses reluctantly agrees to liberate the Hebrew people from their bondage and, by God's hand, seek a new place to call home (Rendle 1998, location 1567). Particularly instructive to this study are the numerous moments along the journey when Moses wishes to abandon his leadership post in response to the people's anxiety about God's plans (Richardson 1996, location 859).

Numbers 11 presents one of the most poignant moments of pastoral ministry. In Verse 14, Moses cries out to God, "I am unable to carry all this people alone, for they are too heavy for me." The burden of leadership has become too much for him. Scholar and Transforming Center founder Ruth Haley Barton notes that Moses represents a common paradox of leadership: We can be surrounded by people and busy doing good things and yet feel alone with the burdens we carry. Over time, and for a variety of reasons, we can

be worn down. Barton notes this kind of isolation is dangerous for a leader (Barton 2010, 55; Barton 2018, 171).

In God's goodness to an utterly exhausted Moses, a measure of Moses's spirit is poured out upon other trusted leaders. The load is shared. Moses' crushing exhaustion is relieved in the company of others and, together, Moses and seventy leaders bear the emotional and spiritual burdens of leadership (Barton 2014, 171). Thanks be to God; Moses is no longer alone.

Titus is another biblical example of a conversation partner. A Gentile church leader and colleague of the Apostle Paul, Titus is part of a team of more than 100 colleagues who at various times associate with the apostle and share pastoral responsibilities (Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid 1993, 658). After Paul writes a letter harshly criticizing the church in Corinth for their discord, he sends Titus to see how the letter was received. In his second letter to the Corinthian Christians, Paul commends the church for their hospitality to Titus. Upon Titus's return, Paul notes his delight in seeing how happy Titus is, "being refreshed in his spirit" by time spent with the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 7:13).

Titus is deployed on various occasions to support churches, address conflict, and appoint and train leaders. He stays until the situation is straightened out, moves on to another assignment, and returns to the apostle when needed. One imagines Titus as a skillful conversation partner whom the apostle frequently deploys to challenging situations. He is, after all, sent to Crete, a place known for its particularly challenging cultural context. It is not surprising that many find Titus to be a patron saint of short-term transitional pastors.

Surely there were times when Titus felt discouraged. Perhaps a hint of that can be sensed in Paul's early greeting found in Titus 1:5a: "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished." Read imaginatively, this portion of Paul's instructions could be understood as a response to Titus's moments of doubt when he may have wondered, "why on earth did I ever agree to this assignment?" What church leader has not returned to those who encouraged us to take a difficult assignment and asked such a question?

When communities within the church find themselves at odds, the church often holds intentional conversations to listen to various contentions and reach agreement on a new way forward. These occasions are known broadly as the meeting of councils of the church. In the early decades of church life, factions sprang up around strategies for sharing the Gospel: should the church start first with Jewish converts, or seek to reach Gentiles, or both? The Council of Jerusalem, described in Acts 15, was called to bring leaders together for this specific conversation.

Councils of the church of various places and sizes continue to gather diverse conversation partners to settle disagreements and find a united way forward. The ministry of facilitating intentional conversations with high stake outcomes is an essential skill needed by transitional leaders. Crafting opportunities for corporate leadership discernment to take place is a feature of Ruth Haley Barton's book *Discerning God's Will Together* (Barton 2012). Barton provides a vision for conflict transformation through practices of clarifying the work at hand and discerning what God is calling leaders to do.

As the stories of Moses, Titus, and others illustrate, it is wise and necessary for leaders to draw others into conversation when they have exhausted their ability to support

people or navigate a new context. In these examples, as well as our own experience, the church sees the value of spiritual practices that bring out new perspectives in a season of transitional ministry (Chastain 2018; Cleveland 2013).

A Practical Theology of Leadership Community

Leaders need deep roots in the company and counsel of others to survive and thrive. There is no substitute for a rich life in Christian community. It can be built with the help of spiritual friends, but rarely is friendship alone adequate to sustain pastors in the crucible of leadership (Edgar 2016, 140; Friedman 2007; Wasberg 2013). To develop the capacity to lead people throughout one's vocational life, a leader must invest considerable time, energy, and imagination in a community of practice. A community of practice might take place in the context of ministry, such as in a church setting, or in the context of learning, such as an academic or professional development program. Without a community, leaders can lose heart and may lose their way (Andrews et al 2009; Barton 2012; Bolsinger 2015, 194; Oswald 1991, 128; Rohr 2013, 145).

Pastoral ministry today can be as lonely and burdensome as Moses found it to be and as challenging and contentious as Titus and the Jerusalem Council leaders found it to be. Seeking a leadership community can be an effective antidote. A practical theology of leadership community invites church leaders to accept hard assignments. Community in the context of church leadership has two distinct applications: (a) committing to stay in a particular community for a season and (b) practicing spiritual discernment in this community.

In this project, this stream of thought flows from two communities of practice. The first is a presbytery, which is a Presbyterian mid council of the church consisting of

teaching elders—also called Ministers of Word and Sacrament—and ruling elders. In a presbytery, leaders are bound together for care and support and to discern what the Spirit is saying to the church. The second community of practice is a learning community. Learning communities offer support through commitments made over time, such as a lectionary preaching group, an academic degree program, conferences, or a series of retreats. Shorter-term commitments such as Week One or Week Two training offered by the Transitional Ministry Education Consortium may provide a starting place for community when coupled with ongoing learning.

Various ecclesial models offer leadership community by bringing peers together for learning, companionship, and fellowship (Foltz-Morrison 2013; Hawkins 1997, 65). One of the most popular in the PC(USA) is the CREDO program offered through the Board of Pensions. Some models like CREDO involve developing a rule of life or some form of agreement about following certain spiritual practices. These practices may include participation in regular meetings, reading a set of materials, spending time in prayer, and other spiritual activities.

In the context of this study, the researcher explored an ecumenical model provided by the Transforming Center. The Transforming Center's model of spiritual formation asks that each person in the community make a covenant with each other that addresses many aspects of community life, including making a commitment to the gathered leadership community (Barton 2014, 165). An integral part of this commitment involves trusting one another with our personal stories. This practice involves learning to see ourselves within the larger story of what God is doing and discovering new ways to think about our stories.

As the researcher, my theology of leadership community has changed significantly since my first call to ministry nine years ago. I used to hope for a call to a stable, long term ministry context, but that has changed. I once relied on personal spiritual practices as largely solo endeavors. But with each instance of being uprooted from one ministry to move to another, my well-being began to fray. Personal spirituality alone was no longer adequate.

Several years ago, it dawned on me that I had become untethered from a stable spiritual community. One-on-one practices of spiritual direction and personal coaching were no longer enough to meet my needs as a leader. Around the same time, my academic community was drawing to a close. By God's grace and a splash of serendipity, I was invited to make a commitment to the practice of community joining a transforming community.

The Transforming Center's commitment to leadership transformation requires that when the community gathers each person will show up and be fully present and engaged in the life of the community. I was part of the Transforming Center's Community Sixteen, referred to as TC16. I recall a robust conversation that took place early in the life of this group about what it means to make a commitment to the community, including attending all of the nine retreats.

Through this experience I was welcomed into a peer group based on the common experience of learning spiritual practices. This learning community took shape through teaching; reading spiritual materials; corporate worship and discernment; and following a rule or set of practices that included solitude, silence, unplugging from technology, time for personal and group reflection, common meals, and the care of a ministry team.

The program culminated in developing a rule of life to help us cultivate a life grounded in God. Six writing prompts were offered to guide the development of our personal rule of life. Table 2.2 presents a summary of the author’s own rule.

Table 2.2 My Rule of Life

	Prompt	Response
Part One	Desire	I came to the first Transforming Community retreat with an academic mindset. God met me there in a surprising way that drew me into a community of support that matched my desire.
Part Two	Invitation to Spiritual Transformation	I sense an invitation to reorient my life to honor patterns of rest, and to acknowledge human limitations both in myself and others.
Part Three	Rule of Life	Disciplines helpful to me include creative writing, morning or evening prayers, making art in community, and cultivating my garden.
Part Four	Acknowledge the Challenges	When on retreat, I enjoy long stretches of solitude and silence as spiritual practices of renewal. Closer to home, good distractions of daily activities tend to shorten these practices. Therefore, quarterly retreats are good things to build into my life.
Part Five	Community	During the series of nine retreats, I journeyed with a coach who was vital to my process. Afterward my community shifted from structured gatherings to chosen companionship of spiritual friendships and mentors.
Part Six	For the Sake of Others	Drawn to the disciples described in the Emmaus Road account, I sense God inviting me to set tables of welcome for people who are not inclined to stay. Like the disciples, my hospitality encourages people to linger, to engage in conversation. Currently this involves me in anti-racism conversations that may lead to practices of restorative justice.

Following a rule of life that includes personal and corporate practices can provide the environment a pastor longs for (Brueggemann 2019, 106; Peterson 1992, 108; Andrews et al. 2009). The invitation to spiritual transformation through rest, sabbath keeping, and planning for sabbatical was particularly challenging for me. Participating in this ecumenical ministry rooted me in a leadership community that has changed the trajectory of my life in ministry. It offered a safe space to acknowledge the joys and challenges I faced in the company of others who were similar enough to me that understood one another.

An Ecclesial Theology of Vocational Experience

This stream of thought builds a theological basis for listening to the experience of practitioners as a foundation for developing new models.

This section briefly looks downstream at the epochs of transitional ministry to understand how this category of ministry emerged. It next anticipates the need to examine the vocational experiences of today's transitional pastors to discover what should be addressed to equip more pastors to serve as transitional ministry leaders, especially in the sub-specialty of short-term transitional pastoring.

The interim pastorate was born in the second half of the twentieth century to meet the opportunity presented when one pastorate transitioned to another. In some ways its origin can be credited to American pragmatism: when there is an opening for entrepreneurship, seize it. The interim pastorate was crafted in response to a high rate of pastoral turnover among newly installed pastors who followed a long-term pastor. This tendency for a newly installed pastor to leave after a brief period of time led to the label

“unintentional interim pastor.” By contrast, an intentional interim pastor served for a brief period of time to give special, intensive help with the transition (Mead 2014, 91).

Mead, who perceived problems with interim ministry in the 1960s and began writing about them in the 1970s, describes the period of transition as a pregnant moment in an organization. He urges leaders to view the moment as a signal that significant changes are likely to occur rather than as an uncomfortable interruption (Mead 2014, 92). What presents itself as a problem to solve becomes an opportunity to create congregational health and vitality (Dale 2009; Savage 2008). Forty years after writing about his early observations, Mead looks back and calls his work “action research.” He describes it as acting thoughtfully, watching what happens, reflecting, and using what you learn to guide further action (Mead 2014, 93).

By the mid 2000s, scholarship was producing new models of ministry praxis, and a theology of interim practice began to emerge with particular tasks. Figure 2 shows the developmental tasks of interim ministry (Lumsden 2015).



Figure 2. “The Developmental Tasks of Intentional Interim Ministry.” Lumsden, 2015.

In the 2010s, a theology of transitional ministry expanded the roles of interim pastors from placeholders with tasks to transitional pastors with identified work to do and longer horizons in which to do it (Lumsden 2017). This shift recognized the changing nature of church life already appearing in the pre-pandemic religious landscape (Foltz-Morrison 2013). Transitional ministry offered churches an opportunity to honestly assess congregation life and make appropriate plans for their future whether that meant change, managing decline, or preparing for closure.

A number of thinkers have argued that pastors, for their wellbeing, need a broad spectrum of conversation partners and a commitment to spiritual practices that offer a community of practice in which to pursue a life with God (Barton 2012; Barton 2014, 165; Brueggemann 2001, 117; Chandler 2010; Olsen and Devor 2015, 75). Just as we imagine Moses, Titus, and the Jerusalem Council delegates serving the church, today's pastors look to structures of the church for guidance. They look to relationships in Christian community as places to turn when ministry is difficult (Bloom 2019; DuChene and Sundby 2022; Leach 2020).

As the church emerges from the experience of a global pandemic, every congregation is faced with the challenge of transitional ministry. Pastors who are resilient and who engage in self-care and invest in leadership community will last.

Conclusion

Listening to the experiences of pastors and providing safe environments for the expression of their authenticity will help the church discover what types of accompaniments and support are most beneficial and identify where there are gaps in meeting those needs. Are pastors finding helpful conversation partners? Are they in

communities of practice that offer room for growth and renewal? Are the councils of the church listening to pastors' experience and responding with forms of support that are creative, life-giving, and helpful in today's reality? Put another way, are we encouraging the right kind of leadership to guide us? Do we recognize that there are no simple, painless solutions to the decline the church is facing? The research questions explored in this study are designed to help the church understand who we are becoming and what it takes to sustain leaders who do this work. Chapter 3 presents the methodology this study employed to explore these questions.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

[Because]... many of the world's most pressing problems occur from a lack of understanding—and that's a problem we can solve.
– Qualtrics.com

Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this study was to learn about the experiences of pastors who lead transitional ministry in congregations today, specifically their formation through training and the forms of support that are most beneficial to them. This study was initially intended to broadly examine transitional ministry. Its focus was narrowed when the researcher limited the study sample to PC(USA) pastors in short-term transitional or interim ministry roles. The researcher sought to discover what is missing for pastors in short-term transitional calls and make recommendations to help Presbyterian leaders at all levels of the church find ways to meet these needs. The theoretical basis for this study was informed by the input of practitioners, trainers, and clergy with an interest in learning about the experience of transitional pastors. Guided by these interests, the researcher developed a survey tool to explore the study's five research questions:

1. How likely are pastors with transitional ministry training to seek calls to serve as transitional pastors?
2. What draws leaders to transitional ministry in congregations?
3. How satisfied are they with transitional ministry training?
4. What, if anything would they change about training?
5. Which type of post-training support is most beneficial, and what forms of support are difficult to find?

This chapter begins with the backstory of two developments that led to the study. The first was an exploration of action research two years prior. The second was learning that a transitional ministry training site was interested in supporting the project and agreed to invite clergy who had participated in their program to contribute to the study. Both developments informed the research design that led to the creation of an online survey tool.

Next, the chapter outlines the contents of the survey and describes what the responses said and did not say. The survey tool garnered a substantive response that offered clarity on the first four questions. The lack of clarity in the data about the fifth research question—which type of post-training support is most beneficial, and what forms of support are difficult to find?—led to a series of follow-up interviews with nine survey respondents. The researcher sorted and categorized the responses using focused and magnitude coding, techniques for organizing and analyzing data that involve assigning labels to data (Engler et al. 2022, 514). Repetitive rounds of coding were time intensive and necessary to bring grounded theory to the data. Coding of the survey responses and interviews found 17 common categories of data shared across both research tools. Memoing observations and wonderings played a key role in data analysis that coalesced in a storyline.

The participants' responses led to key findings about why pastors initially engage in short-term transitional ministry, what sustains them in their calls, why they may leave, and what might be done to encourage vocational callings in this work. Over time, the researcher's analysis suggested a storyline related to short-term transitional ministry practice, which will be presented in chapter 4.

Getting Started

The researcher first met with eight peers who were serving as interim and transitional pastors in three area presbyteries (Northwest Coast, Olympia, and Seattle Presbytery) to explore the possibility of collaborating in an action research study around our shared interest in acting on common areas of concern (Cameron et al. 2010; Dick 2016, 402). Our paths had crossed sporadically over the previous five years: a few of us met at training workshops; others of us had worked together for short seasons of ministry. We had common interests as practitioners in the field and some of us shared friendships. Although we happened to be PC(USA) pastors, there was no impetus from our denomination drawing us together. Yet we shared enough common concerns about the nature of our work to devote several hours together.

The eight of us gathered for the first time in the summer of 2019. We asked and explored these central questions: What draws you to this work? What don't you like about it? What forms of support are most helpful? and What might be done to enhance this work in our area?

We each gave permission for notes to be taken at the gathering and distributed afterward. Although we shared many things in common, our stories varied. Each of us had come to transitional ministry for different reasons. Some of us had been in ministry since our twenties, and others were just starting out. The types of supportive communities we enjoyed also varied. We did not perceive the commonalities in our stories until we began to share what frustrated us in our current calls. We felt underresourced in a myriad of ways, but we shared a common desire for better support from the mid councils where we served. The term "mid council" refers to a judicatory or authoritative denominational

entity that provides support and guidance to clergy, congregations, new worshiping communities, and those with membership within its bounds. The form of mid council support most referenced in this study comes from the committee or commission on ministry (COM), the body that oversees ministers, and the Executive Presbyter, also called General Presbyter (Mead 2014, 61).

Despite feeling a sense of call to the work of transitional ministry in shorter-term settings, we pastors wondered aloud how sustainable it could be as a long-term career path. The group sketched out a list of concerns to raise with leaders of area presbyteries. Energized by a desire to further explore this commonality, we agreed to meet again that fall, but for a variety of reasons the meeting did not transpire. Perhaps it felt too risky or too tender a topic at the time.

Although our personal sense of call and interests in this area of ministry varied significantly, we did find that we shared common concerns about the nature of the challenges we faced. For instance, we experienced a lack of standardization by presbyteries in diagnosing the needs of a congregation and finding a suitable pastor match. Too often the situation one of us found ourselves in was quite different from the one initially described to us. Additional personal concerns included difficulty in financing mortgages due to lack of employment longevity in a church and uncertainty about time between pastoral calls. Table 3.1 outlines themes that emerged from this gathering and that were useful to the eventual design of the survey tool.

Table 3.1 Themes from 2019 Pastors Gathering that Informed the 2021 Research Design

Question	Responses
What draws you to this work?	I needed a job, close to retirement, someone invited me to try it I enjoy helping congregations in seasons of change I like the challenge and nature of this work (i.e. it is short term) I like leading change and the future orientation of this work Church leaders, sessions, are motivated to do the work
What don't you like about this work?	Compensation is a challenge, negotiating contracts is hard, different presbyteries have different standards It is hard to save for a sabbatical It can be hard to get refinancing for a mortgage due to short term calls Sometimes what I walk into is not what I anticipated
What forms of support are most helpful?	Friendships, especially outside the church, someone reliable to call who 'gets it' Spiritual direction, going regularly Asking for what I need in terms of compensation, rest between calls Resources for learning, conversation, about work and not about work
What might we do to enhance this work in our area?	Gatherings of peers to talk, offer support Bring our common concerns to mid council leaders Get together again in the near future to discuss next steps Invite others with similar concerns to join us

The use of action research for this project sprang from my desire to collaborate with peers on a study that might lead to strengthening the forms of support we needed to sustain longevity in our careers. Action research (AR) is research into one's own practice; thus, only practitioners and groups of practitioners can conduct it (Herr and Anderson, 2015, 161). I was drawn to an AR approach for the study because it is a type of applied research design suitable for finding the most effective way to solve a practical problem such as those identified in Table 3.1. I had hoped the pastors I knew might be interested

in identifying a common problem that we could address together. While we identified several common problems, we lacked sustained connection in the workplace and compensation for time spent in research. Hence, we discovered that AR was not a viable option for our group (Cameron et al. 2010; Dick 2016). Perhaps greater anonymity would have been helpful. The researcher wondered about this in the pages of journals that later informed the research design of this study.

My desire to know more about the pastors who lead transitions remained. A new direction took shape during a conversation with faculty of the transitional ministry training site at Menucha, who expressed support for the study and asked if we might collaborate. We shared a mutual desire to improve the training and support available to transitional pastors (Lumsden 2020). This shared interest brought new possibilities for the study's design to adapt to a new context.

We envisioned the study taking place in person at the Menucha Retreat Center in Oregon. This time, the researcher's approach to the research topics was to conduct focus groups. Forty training participants had registered to come from across the United States. With the support of the faculty, the researcher planned to sit in on the training lectures and discussions and conduct the focus groups during free time. I looked forward to hearing what participants had to say by either recording their voices and creating a transcript or giving them the option to complete a written feedback form (Winter and Woodhead 2022, 542).

The researcher planned to collect confidential feedback about the following issues: (1) why participants came to this training site (location, faculty, recommendation from others, dates, or other), (2) how satisfied they were with the training, (3) if they

would recommend the training to others, (4) what they might change about the training, and (5) how likely they were to serve as a transitional or interim pastor in their next call. The demographics that would be gathered included faith tradition, years of experience in ministry, type of ministry settings, age at ordination, and career stage (early, mid, later, or retired). What participants were looking for in terms of post-training support would be treated as a subcategory of their current ministry context.

Days before the training was to commence, the COVID-19 outbreak delayed the training and the researcher's plans for this study. Eventually new workshops were offered online by TMWorkshops (TMW) in October and November 2021. The researcher participated in two of them: the Interim Ministry Intensive and the Week Two workshops and cohort gatherings. However, the online training format was not conducive at that time to focus group feedback. So, the researcher developed a new research design that allowed participants to provide confidential feedback through an online survey.

The new design was based on mutual interest in seeing this research study move forward. The TMW faculty provided the researcher with contact information for all participants in their training programs from 2015-2021. The founder of TMW provided a statement of support and interest in this study in the Letter of Information about the survey that accompanied the Informed Consent (appendix C1).

Online Survey Tool

The researcher designed the online survey tool in Fall 2021 using the Qualtrics platform at Seattle University. The survey included questions originally intended for the focus groups with the addition of more detailed questions about the types of post-training support that were most beneficial to pastors. The survey also asked about what type of

support the participants found difficult to find. This study garnered a maximal variation (purposive) sampling by selecting participants who could answer the questions based on their lived experience of vocational transitional ministry (Creswell 2016).

The researcher sent an email invitation to approximately 300 participants in the training that took place at the Menucha site from 2015-2019 or the online TMWorkshops in 2021. Invitations were also sent to followers of the researcher's website and posted on the researcher's social media channels. Within three weeks, the researcher received nearly 90 survey responses. The survey was taken offline due to the robust response and the researcher's concern about managing the sample size.

The survey asked forty questions in total: eight demographic questions, eight questions unique to participants who took training on site at Menucha or online via TMWorkshops, ten multiple choice questions, eleven evaluative questions, and three open-ended narrative questions. Survey questions were labeled with a Q followed by a number (e.g. Q1 for question one). For some sections, duplicate questions were created so that participants could answer based on whether they attended Week One or Week Two training. For example, Q20 asked Week One participants, "what type of leadership support did you find most helpful?" and Q36 asked the same question of Week Two participants. Evaluative questions used a Likert scale, a research tool that is useful for analyzing the intensity or sensitivity of one's response. For a complete list of survey questions see appendix D.

The first section of the survey asked demographics questions about ordination, denominational affiliation, age at ordination, and current role in ministry. The next section included questions about transitional ministry training Week One and Week Two

participation and asked five additional questions of those who took their training on site at Menucha or online via TMWorkshops. These questions asked participants about their training satisfaction, why they chose that training site, if they would recommend the training site to others, and what change—if any—would they recommend to the training faculty. The researcher included these site-specific questions in anticipation of a large sample size due to the faculty’s express interest in this feedback. Satisfaction and recommendation questions were not asked of those who attended training at other training sites. Table 3.2 shows the survey questions about training.

Table 3.2 Survey Questions about Training

	Question	Format	Response choices
Q17/Q33	How likely are you to seek a call to serve as TP?	Likert scale	
Q18/Q34	If likely to seek a call as TP, What draws you to or energizes you about transitional ministry?	Multiple choice (choose all that apply)	I enjoy guiding congregations in seasons of transition, I sense a call to lead change, My wages and compensation are adequate, I have a community of colleagues who support me in this work, Other
Q19/Q35	If unlikely to seek a call as TP, What does not appeal to you about transitional ministry?	Multiple choice (choose all that apply)	I do not enjoy guiding congregations in seasons of transition, I do not sense a call to lead change, My wages and compensation are inadequate, I do not have a community of colleagues who support me in this work, Other
Q6	How many times have you served as TP or IP?	Short answer	
Q20/Q36	If serving as TP or IP, what type of leadership support do you find most helpful?	Multiple choice (choose all that apply)	peer learning group, mid council or other denominational support, spiritual direction, leadership coaching, counseling or therapy, spiritual friendships, other
Q22/Q38	If serving as TP or IP, Is there a type of leadership support you wish for, or have not found?	Yes or No	Yes or No

Q	If yes to Q22/Q38: What type of leadership support do you wish to find?	Multiple choice (choose all that apply)	peer learning group, mid council or other denominational support, spiritual direction, leadership coaching, counseling or therapy, spiritual friendships, other.
Q	If yes to Q22/38: what inhibits your access to this type of support?	Multiple choice (choose all that apply)	Financial constraints, time constraints, mid council lack of support, can't find a local group, something else

The next section of the survey asked respondents from all training sites and all traditions/denominations what type of leadership support they had found most helpful and which, if any, they wished for but had not found. They were asked to choose all that applied from the following options: peer learning group, mid council or other denominational support, spiritual direction, leadership coach, counseling or therapy, spiritual friendships, or something else. Finally, this section asked participants what inhibited their access to the forms of leadership support they wished for but had not found. Was time, or funding, or something else limiting their access?

Sample Population

Two-thirds of survey respondents identified as clergy in the Presbyterian Church (USA). When the data sample was narrowed to PC(USA) clergy the data saturated more highly than for clergy from other traditions. This shift narrowed the comparative analysis sampling from eighty-nine respondents from various Protestant faith traditions to sixty-four pastors in one tradition. The data sample size of PC(USA) survey participants who took Week One or Week Two on site at Menucha or online via TMWorkshops was 42 (see appendix H). When that group was narrowed to pastors who were serving in short-

term transitional ministry at the time of the survey and who agreed to be contacted for additional feedback, the sample size was reduced to 15.

The researcher was encouraged to focus in this manner as the most recent research published by the PC(USA) was from a 2007 report (PC[USA] Research Services of the PC[USA] 2007). Although more recent research about clergy well-being has been published, requests by the researcher to review the 2021 data on interim/transitional pastors in the "PC(USA) Minister Survey Well Being Report" were not granted. Findings from the questions about training offered on site at Menucha and online via TMWorkshops were also narrowed to Presbyterian pastors.

Initial Coding and Analysis

The researcher began to work through the data repeatedly over several months, noting code frequency, memoing, and writing reflexively in successive rounds of coding (Creswell 2016, 217). Memoing is a data analysis process researchers use to record patterns, wonderings, hunches, and recurring themes. This involved looking closely at the data points where there was saturation (meaning no new information was useful) and where there were gaps (Creswell 2016, 110). The researcher decided to employ grounded theory to allow themes to emerge.

The purpose of grounded theory is to examine a phenomenon for which there is little understanding. The theory it produces is "grounded" in data that has been systematically collected and analyzed. Grounded theory can involve a commitment to honor the voices and input of a purposive data sample and may enable the researcher to see a storyline emerge (Creswell 2016). Grounded theory work requires constant

comparative analysis, memo writing, theoretical sampling, and sensitivity. For this project, that work took place between February and December 2022.

The data began to reveal two areas to explore: (1) how pastors with transitional ministry training seek support in the on-going, broad application of learning and (2) what forms of support might be most beneficial to PC(USA) pastors with training and experience in short-term calls? The researcher's interest was sparked to focus on this question by listening to pastors' experience through the data (Stausberg 2011). This study was gaining clarity about the research topics.

Follow-up Interviews

Thirty-four of the survey questions offered data results that were ready to analyze; however, six questions did not offer clarity. To explore the research topics that needed more clarity, the researcher decided to expand the design to include interviews with a subset of the Presbyterian clergy sample who met the following criteria: (1) they were currently leading or had recently led congregations or other entities through a season of transition and (2) they had taken either Week One or Week Two on site at Menucha or online via TMWorkshops. A subset of 15 PC(USA) clergy from among the survey participants was identified. Criteria about age at ordination, satisfaction with training, service in another denomination, or frequency of serving as a transitional pastor were not taken into consideration. These 15 clergy were invited to participate in a telephone interview with the researcher. Extending the research design beyond the survey to include interviews meant adding six to twelve months to the research calendar. The decision was approached delicately, given the time constraints of the School of Theology of Ministry closing its doors 16 months later.

The researcher designed an interview worksheet to collect data on seven questions, each of which corresponded to a question on the survey. Table 3.3 lists the questions and related survey questions.

Table 3.3 Phone Interview Worksheet

Question	Corresponding survey questions
What draws you to serve as transitional or interim pastor?	Q18, Q34
What/if anything does not appeal to you?	Q19, Q35
What forms of support are most beneficial to you? How frequently do you interact with this support? How much does this support cost if anything?	Q20, Q36
What forms of support do you currently have in place?	Q20, Q36
What forms do you ‘wish’ for and why? [have you had these in the past]	Q22, Q38
What impedes or limits your access to the ‘wished’ for forms of support?	Q23, Q39
Is there anything else you’d like to say/add?	Q40

Note: when two survey questions are listed, the first was asked of participants who completed Week One training and the second was the same question asked of participants who completed Week Two training.

Appendix C2 includes the interview information sent to 15 survey participants who were invited to be interviewed. Within one week, nine pastors responded to the invitation to a phone interview. At the time of the interviews, one pastor was living in Asia, and the remaining eight resided in Arizona, California, Oregon, Pennsylvania, or Washington; combined they had served in at least a dozen US states over their tenure. Four clergy were currently serving as transitional pastors. Their experience ranged from an associate pastor who had served in an interim role once to another pastor who had served more than fifteen congregations. Two clergy were serving in various capacities at

mid council levels. Three clergy were bi-vocational: one worked in health care, one worked in academia, and one served as a leadership coach in addition to leading a congregation. Table 3.4 presents information about the phone-interview participants.

Table 3.4 Participants in Phone Interviews

Participant survey #	Role today	Training site	In person or online	# times transitional or interim pastor
10	Retired/bivocational	Menucha	In person	15
28	Transitional pastor	TMWorkshops	Online	1
30	Transitional Pastor	Menucha	In person	2
31	Transitional pastor	Austin Seminary and Menucha	In person	12
54	Bivocational pastor/transitional pastor/consultant/coach	Menucha and TMWorkshops	In person and Online	6 as pastor/ 5 as consultant
55	Mid Council staff	TMWorkshops	Online	1
65	Bivocational pastor/ Mid Council staff	Menucha	In person	4
78	Transitional pastor	Synod of Lincoln Trails/Menucha	In person	13
83	Bivocational/academia	Menucha	In person	3

Over the next three weeks the researcher contacted each pastor at an agreed upon time and listened to their feedback. The researcher followed an interview protocol that was consistent throughout the process (Creswell 2016). The questions were not sent in advance. The interviews were not recorded. The researcher took notes during and directly after each interview. Points that a pastor stressed with emphasis, emotion, humor, or otherwise noteworthy effect were circled on the worksheet as quotes. If anything was unclear in the notes after an interview, the researcher sent a follow up email to the pastor to clarify. The researcher sent four such emails and received three replies, two of which

were more than a page long. Two pastors reached out to the researcher on their own with further insights to offer. The space in these interviews often felt holy.

Additional Coding

To assess the survey's three open response essay questions the researcher and another research assistant comparatively analyzed more than 200 unique inputs from all survey respondents. The initial round of coding used a structural coding method suitable to open-ended survey responses (Saldana 2016, 98). This round looked at Q14 (40 inputs) and Q30 (46 inputs) feedback about possible changes to Week One and Week Two training on site at Menucha and online via TMWorkshops.

Magnitude coding was used in a second and third round to track how many times a common theme was mentioned (Saldana 2016, 86). In total, 17 initial codes were identified. The second round of coding added feedback from the Menucha and TMWorkshops participants to Q40, which asked, "Is there anything else you would like to say?" This added 129 inputs. No additional codes were needed. A third round of focused coding added feedback from survey respondents who attended training at other sites (42 inputs). No additional codes were needed.

In a fourth and final round of coding that added inputs from the interviews, three new codes emerged: academia, team of advisors, and spiritual practices. Magnitude coding of the interview sample population demonstrated a depth of vocational experience sufficient for the researcher to accept the validity of nine interviews as substantive and sufficient responses to the data gaps in the survey. For instance, eight of the nine were currently in transitional ministry roles, and in total they had served more than sixty times as transitional or interim pastors.

Validating the Data and Coding

Inviting multiple perspectives on the same research data is called triangulation. This research practice is important to check the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations (Creswell 2016, 117). To validate the study, the researcher collaborated with two DMin students, hired a former mid council leader to conduct an external audit, and worked with a PhD candidate in survey design to audit the survey data and create the data visualization figures in appendix F. One of the DMin students audited the initial coding of the open-ended survey questions. Both DMin students read an early version of the project and offered feedback. The mid council leader audited the interview coding, theme coding, and read an initial draft of the project for accuracy. The researcher also collaborated with interview participants to validate their stories (Creswell 2016, 193).

Limitations and Delimitations

This study was limited in scope by seeking input about training satisfaction and possible changes to training from only one of the eleven transitional ministry training sites. This study limited the focus about what draws pastors to transitional ministry based on the input of PC(USA) pastors who had attended Week One Transitional Ministry training. Assessing the satisfaction of the ways in which the various types of support were identified, funded, and evaluated was beyond the scope of this project. Further, the comparative assessment of pastoral wellbeing from the 2021 PC(USA) report was not available to study.

This study was also limited by the amount of time respondents were able to give to the survey and interviews. Time spent completing the survey varied from a few minutes to more than a half hour. Time spent in interviews varied from 10 minutes to

over an hour. Lastly, the study did not directly involve congregants, family members, mid council leaders, and friends of the survey participants who may have offered helpful perspectives.

While satisfaction related to transitional ministry training and the importance of various types of support for pastors serving in this field of ministry will be assessed in this research study, satisfaction with the various types of support, where and how they are found, funded, and evaluated is beyond the scope of this study.

Conclusion

The researcher's decision to add interviews to the research design was a risk primarily to the timely completion of this study. However, the added rich descriptions offered by interview participants reinforced the soundness of my choice to use a grounded theory approach to analyze the data. The next chapter describes how multiple rounds of data coding found data saturation that revealed a storyline about the experience of transitional pastors (Creswell 2016). In the next chapter we see how findings from qualitative research work through surveys and interviewing is practical theological work that can feel at times like holy ground (Campbell-Reed and Scharen 2013, 235).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Mission cannot be discerned without formation, nor can mission be sustained without ongoing commitment to transformation in Christ's presence.
– Ruth Haley Barton, *Life Together in Christ*

We believe that as God invites us to participate in redemptive work in the world, There is almost always an invitation along the way to deal with our own stuff.
– Michaela O'Donnell

Introduction

This chapter explores the findings of this study by examining what pastors with transitional ministry training had to say about what drew them to this ministry and how satisfied they were with the training and the support they sought while in short-term transitional ministry calls. The study found that pastors are generally satisfied with transitional ministry training, and the likelihood of a pastor who has received it to seek a call requiring those skills is relatively high. Most pastors are drawn to this work of leading change because it is what the church needs. Church leaders want to hear pastors' actual job experiences because the church needs them, and those willing to take short-term calls are increasingly hard to find.

This chapter briefly describes the survey design, sample population, and participant demographics. Next, the chapter presents the study's findings in relation to the five research questions that guided this project:

1. How likely are Presbyterian clergy with transitional ministry training to serve as transitional pastors?
2. What draws Presbyterian leaders to transitional ministry?

3. How satisfied are Presbyterian leaders with transitional ministry training at the study site?
4. What, if anything, would they change about training?
5. Which type of post-training support is most beneficial to Presbyterians in transitional ministry, and what forms of support are difficult to find?

Using the survey tool, the study found a high correlation between clergy with transitional ministry training and their likelihood to serve as a transitional pastor when seeking their next call. Similarly, the survey uncovered reliable results about what draws leaders to transitional ministry. Most survey respondents reported being satisfied with their training and did not indicate something they would change about their training experience. Those who did provide a response about what they would change indicated they would like to have had the opportunity to discuss points of practical application about their specific context.

The survey analysis revealed answers to three of the five research questions. However, it did not uncover reliable results about what is unappealing to clergy about transitional ministry in short-term calls. Nor did the survey find what forms of support are difficult to find and what stands in the way of clergy accessing that support. Analysis in this section addresses research questions one, three, four, and the first part of question two. The section concludes with a discussion of the relationship between survey coding, interview coding, and the findings early coding revealed. This analysis addresses the second part of research question two and the complexity of the issues raised in research question five.

The third part of this chapter presents what the data revealed using a grounded theory approach. The researcher's goal was to recognize the stories the data told. This section outlines how repetitive cycles of survey and interview coding and memoing led to keyword analysis of categories and themes that revealed a storyline consistent with the use of grounded theory. It concludes with a storyline of how leaders are shaped for transitional ministry. Specifically, the study discovered how pastoral formation for short-term transitional ministry takes place among PC(USA) pastors and why it is increasingly difficult to find pastors willing to do this work.

The analysis of survey and interview data together identified five types of leadership support beneficial to transitional pastors. These types of support are illustrated with quotes from clergy's narrative survey responses and quotes from interviews. Listening to their experience helps us see which types of support are most beneficial, and which are not. The five types of support are expanded later in chapter 5.

Lastly, this chapter reveals the survey findings about Week One and Week Two training on site at Menucha or online through TMWorkshops. Between 2015 and 2019 the faculty of this Pacific Northwest training site conducted in-person training at the Menucha retreat center in Oregon. In 2021, this training shifted to an online format known as TMWorkshops. The survey asked four specific questions of those who took Week One or Week Two at this training site. This site was chosen because of its innovative approach and the willingness of faculty to cooperate with and support this study.

The chapter concludes with the researcher's reflections on the project findings and hints at recommendations that will be discussed in chapter 5. The study answers the

research questions with a storyline of how leaders are shaped for transitional ministry and a grounded theory storyline of how pastoral formation for short-term transitional ministry takes place among PC(USA) pastors and why it is increasingly difficult to find pastors willing to do this work.

Participant Demographics

The first section of the survey gathered demographic information about respondents. The single data point that all respondents had in common is that they were ordained clergy. Most were from mainline traditions and most were still active in ministry. Less than 10 percent were retired. Close to 80 percent were PC(USA) Presbyterian clergy. Six percent were ELCA Lutheran. Five percent were United Church of Christ clergy. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), ECO Presbyterian, Episcopalian, United Methodist, American Baptists, and Reformed Church in America were also represented. Nearly thirty percent of survey respondents had served in denominations other than the one where they were ordained.

Participants' ages at ordination varied. Thirty-three percent of the respondents were in their 20s, another 33 percent were in their 30s, 20 percent were in their 40s, and 12 percent were in their 50s, leaving less than five percent older than 59 at ordination. It may have been useful to ask if one identified as being in an early, mid, or later career stage, but the question was not asked.

Fifty percent of respondents identified as interim or transitional pastors and 35 percent served in other roles such as installed pastor, mid council leader, leadership coach, and one as a publisher. Ten percent were retired. Five percent were seeking calls.

Of those who had served as transitional or interim pastors, 58 percent had served once or twice, 28 percent had served 3-9 times, and 18 percent had served more than 10 times.

Findings based on Research Questions

Research Question 1: How Likely are Pastors with Transitional Ministry Training to Serve as Transitional Pastors?

The survey asked all respondents how likely they were to seek their next call as a transitional pastor, what draws some to serve in transitional ministry, and what does not appeal to others about it. Following Week One, 70% reported being extremely likely or somewhat likely to seek their next call as a transitional leader, compared to 68% following Week Two. Those who responded being extremely likely or somewhat likely to seek their next call as a transitional leader were asked to indicate why by selecting all applicable options from a multiple-choice list. Forty-two percent indicated that they enjoy guiding congregations in seasons of change, and 32 percent said they have a sense of call to this ministry. Only ten percent of clergy with Week One training reported having a community of colleagues who support them in this work. The number grew only to 12 percent among clergy with Week Two training. Less than five percent of respondents indicated that their wages and compensation were adequate. “Other” responses totaled 14 percent and ranged from, “I’m never bored, I get to be creative, I like to be involved in healing, I am always learning,” to “I am following my wife’s call and I know this could be a possibility.” Appendix F provides more detailed survey analysis.

When data was limited to feedback from PC(USA) clergy who took training on site at Menucha or online via TMWorkshops, the likelihood of a participant serving as a transitional pastor in their next call rose from 64 percent following Week One to 65

percent following Week Two. More participants responded in the “unlikely” categories following Week Two at 27 percent, compared to 16 percent following Week One.

Reasons given for being unlikely to accept a transitional pastor call included plans to stay in installed positions (while using transitional ministry skills), plans to continue serving in a validated ministry of the church such as a mid council ministry, plans to retire soon, or plans to continue serving as a leadership coach or book publisher.

When this question was opened to all training sites the “likely” response of someone with either Week One or Week Two training rose slightly to 67 percent, while the unlikelihood rose slightly to 17 percent. The data on this first research topic has saturated meaning on this question; the addition of more PC(USA) clergy answering this question would probably not change the outcome significantly. Put another way, training is a helpful indicator of how likely a Presbyterian minister is to seek a call to transitional ministry. Those with both weeks of training seem to have a better idea of whether they will or will not seek a call to transitional ministry (See appendix F).

Table 4.1 illustrates the responses to the first question: how likely are Presbyterian pastors with transitional ministry training to seek calls to serve as transitional pastors? The findings indicate that when survey results from Week One and Week Two are combined, 67 percent of Presbyterian clergy with transitional ministry training are likely to serve as a Transitional Pastor in their next call.

Table 4.1 How Likely are Presbyterian Pastors with Transitional Ministry Training to Serve as Transitional Pastors?

Response	# of combined responses	% of combined responses
Extremely Likely	20	31
Somewhat Likely	23	36
Not likely or unlikely	8	13
Somewhat unlikely	6	9
Extremely unlikely	5	8
No response	1	1

Transitional pastors help congregations cross a boundary from one ministry focus to another. Since all ministry now is transitional ministry, it is encouraging to see that pastors are drawn to it, because the church needs leaders who know how to engage and lead transformative change.

Research Question 2: What Draws Leaders to Transitional Ministry?

All survey respondents with Week One training were asked in Q17, “When seeking your next call, how likely are you to serve as a transitional pastor?” The same question was asked of all survey respondents with Week Two training in Q33. Those who reported being extremely likely or somewhat likely to seek a call to transitional ministry were then asked in Q18 or Q34 to indicate what draws them to serve as a transitional pastor. Five options were provided, and respondents were asked to choose all that applied. Of forty-three ministers asked, 28 responded that they enjoy guiding congregations in seasons of transition, 17 indicated they have a sense of call to lead change, three affirmed their wages and compensation are adequate, and six responded

that they have a community of colleagues who support them in their work. Table 4.2 presents combined responses regarding what Presbyterian pastors said draws them to serve in transitional ministry settings (Q18 and Q34).

Table 4.2 What Draws Presbyterian Ministers to Serve in Transitional Ministry?

Survey option	Rank
Enjoyment of leading change in a congregation	1
Sense of call	2
Adequacy of wages	3
Community of colleagues who support me	4
Other: age nearing retirement, limited location	5

An enjoyment of leading change and a sense of call to serve the church in today’s dramatically changing context draws leaders to this work. Some cite biblical stories as their inspiration, and others cite discontent or the failure of traditional models to meet current needs as their impetus to lead change. In her study of change leaders, scholar Yulee Lee finds that upbringing, faith, pivotal experiences, unintentional transitions, education, discontent, and invitation are all factors that influence leaders’ convictions to become change agents within the non-profit sector (Lee 2023, 18). Findings in this study about factors that influence those who lead transitional ministry in the church are remarkably similar.

Those who responded as being unlikely to seek a call to transitional ministry were likewise asked to indicate why by choosing among five responses in Q19 and Q35. The data for pastors unlikely to find transitional ministry an appealing option was

inconclusive with most choosing “other” as their top option. Both questions inquiring about what does or does not appeal to the respondent about transitional ministry would have benefited from a short answer narrative approach. What did emerge was a high correlation between frequency of short-term calls and clarity about what is not appealing to pastors who take these calls.

The second research question—What Draws Leaders to Transitional Ministry?—was explored further in focused interviews, and those findings will be presented later in this chapter. See appendix H for additional details about their current roles, age at ordination, and if they were serving as a transitional pastor at the time of Week One.

Research Question 3: How Satisfied are Presbyterian Leaders with Transitional Ministry Training?

The next section of the survey inquired about training. Nearly all respondents had taken Week One of transitional ministry training. Of those who had taken Week One training, 48 percent took their training on site at the Menucha facility in Oregon or online via TMWorkshops. Twelve percent took Week One training at Zephyr Point in Nevada. Other training sites that were listed included Mid-America & Lincoln Trails MALT, Luther Seminary, Pittsburgh, Princeton, Montreat, Calvin Center, Ghost Ranch, and Austin Seminary. Most training for Week One took place in person (87 percent). When seeking their next call, 70 percent reported being extremely likely or somewhat likely to seek a call to transitional ministry. Survey questions can be seen in appendix D.

More than half (57 percent) of respondents had taken Week Two of transitional ministry training. Of those who had taken Week Two, nearly two thirds (64 percent) took their training at Menucha or online via TMWorkshops. Week Two training at Midwest

Initiative Missouri was the second highest at 7 percent. Among other locations listed were Montreat, North Carolina; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; the Interim Ministry Network; Luther Seminary; and Austin Seminary. Most training for Week Two took place in person (79 percent, down from 87 percent for Week One). Fifty-six percent of survey respondents were serving as interim or transitional pastors when they took Week Two training, up from 28 percent during Week One. Sixty-one percent of those who had taken Week Two training were serving as interim or transitional pastors at the time of the survey.

For those who indicated they had taken Week One or Week Two at Menucha or through TMWorkshops, the survey asked five additional questions. Those questions focused on training satisfaction, why the training site was chosen, whether participants would recommend the training site to others, and what change, if any, they might recommend to the training faculty. The researcher chose those site-specific questions due to the large sample size anticipated from the site and because of the express interest from the faculty seeking the feedback. Those questions were not asked of participants who attended training at other sites. Findings are reported later in the chapter.

Participants were asked in Q11 why they chose their training site for Week One by selecting all that applied from five options. The options were as follows with response rates in parentheses: recommendation of a friend, colleague, mid council leader (24 percent), training content (20 percent), date or time of year (19 percent), destination (19 percent), faculty (14 percent), other (5 percent). By comparison, the percentage of participants who chose faculty rose to 24 for Week Two (Q27). Likert scales were used to analyze training satisfaction and the likelihood of recommending this training site to

others. Most participants who had taken both Week One (79 percent) and Week Two (81 percent) were extremely satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the training offered (Q12 and Q28). More than 80 percent of those in Week One and Week Two were extremely likely or somewhat likely to recommend this training site to others (Q13 and Q29).

Research Question 4: What, if Anything, Would They Change About Training?

Two of the survey questions (Q14 and Q30, one for each week of training) asked, “If you could change one thing about Week One [Week Two], what would it be and why?” The last question in the survey (Q40) asked participants if there was anything else they wished to share. To assess these open response essay questions, the researcher along with a research assistant analyzed more than 200 unique inputs from all survey respondents. The initial round of coding used a structural coding method suitable to open-ended survey responses (Saldana 2016, 98). This round looked at Q14 (40 inputs) and Q30 (46 inputs) feedback about possible changes to Week One and Week Two training at Menucha and TMWorkshops.

In a second and third round of coding these responses magnitude coding was used to track how many times a common theme was mentioned (Saldana 2016, 86). Seventeen initial codes were identified. The second round of coding added feedback for Q40 (“Is there anything else you would like to say?”) from Menucha and TMWorkshops participants, adding 129 inputs. No additional codes were needed. A third round of focused coding added feedback from survey respondents who attended training at other sites (42 inputs). No additional codes were needed.

The coding and analysis revealed that Presbyterian clergy had more to say about the fourth research question—what, if anything, would Presbyterian leaders change about

training?—after attending Week Two training. Nearly 50 percent of survey respondents with Week Two training wished for something to be added or changed or enhanced about the training compared to 25 percent of Week One respondents who made a suggestion. It is likely that, following Week Two, clergy had a better idea of what they needed based on personal experience in transitional ministry.

Analysis of the narrative essay responses to Q14 and Q30, “what if anything would you change about training?” noted an interest in more practical applications. Recommendations ranged from, “less theory and more nuts and bolts” to “I would like to dig into more practical matters that I face” to “there is a need for the practical ‘how-to’ application.” This response of a PC(USA) installed pastor resonates most succinctly with the broad interest expressed in the survey for more practical application from Week Two respondents:

I remember that Week One and Week Two had different emphases. Week One was more theory (with clear practical applications). It named barriers to change and how to get around them, and how new mindsets are needed. But I would have benefited from time where we could consider the lessons in our specific contexts, with the support of faculty.

Both parts of that request resonated with survey peers: the opportunity during training to speak to one’s ministry context and the opportunity to do so with the support of faculty.

The response rate and level of detail offered in the essay formats indicated a high degree of interest and engagement in the survey topic. Nearly one fourth of participants who attended training at Menucha or online through TMWorkshops took the survey. The research sample and context illustrated a high level of expertise generated by completion of training and years of experience as shown by the number of times survey participants

have led churches in transition. This suggested that, if asked, participants might be willing to offer further insights where the survey data left gaps.

Research Question 5: Which Type of Post-Training Support is Most Beneficial, and What Forms of Support are Difficult to Find?

The next section of the survey asked survey respondents from all training sites and all traditions/denominations what sort of leadership support they have found most helpful (Q20). They were asked to choose all that apply. Week One responses were as follows: peer learning group (26 percent), mid council or other denominational support (23 percent), spiritual direction (18 percent), leadership coach (15 percent), counseling or therapy (10 percent), and “other” (7 percent). Week Two responses to the same question (Q36) ranked similarly but registered a rise from 10 percent to 29 percent for counseling or therapy, and 18 percent added spiritual friendships. It was an oversight not to ask Week One about the impact of spiritual friendships. In total, seven forms of support were identified in the survey as beneficial to transitional pastors.

When asked if there was a type of leadership support participants wished for but had not found, responses from Week Two respondents was 48 percent, nearly double the 28 percent from Week One. The type of leadership support most desired but not found after Week One and Week Two was that of a peer learning group. A desire for mid council or other denominational support rose to 40 percent following Week Two; this compared to 24 percent following Week One.

When participants who had completed Week One were asked to choose all that applied regarding helpful forms of support, the survey registered the following responses: mid council (19 percent), Peer Learning Group (18 percent), Leadership Coaching (12

percent). Among respondents who were asked this question, 59 percent skipped it. Less than one third of participants were serving as transitional pastors during Week One compared to two thirds during Week Two (appendix F, figure 8). The top three forms of support that PC(USA) pastors found hard to find were peer learning groups, mid council support, and leadership coaching, with the last two answers tied.

Responses to the same question from participants who had completed Week Two broke down as follows: peer learning group (29 percent), spiritual friendships (24 percent), mid council Support (18 percent), and leadership coaching (12 percent). Forty-one percent of participants who were asked this question skipped it. At the time of the survey, more transitional and interim pastors reported wanting a type of leadership support they could not find after Week Two than after Week One (appendix F, figure 9). The top two forms of support that PC(USA) pastors named as difficult to find, in rank order, were: (1) peer learning groups and (2) mid council support (appendix F, figure 10).

While the survey led to findings about the value of training and what draws pastors to serve in transitional ministry, it did not elicit enough clarity about negative reactions to seeking a call to transitional ministry; nor did it offer the amount of insight the researcher desired about types of post-training support pastors considered most helpful yet most difficult to find.

Q19 and Q35 asked those who indicated on a Likert scale that they were unlikely or extremely unlikely to seek a call to transitional ministry to indicate why. Likert scales are useful in gathering data about opinions and perceptions by measuring the intensity of a response. Multiple choice options included: not sensing a call to lead change, not enjoying guiding a congregation in seasons of transitions, inadequacy of compensation or

wages, not having a supportive community of colleagues, or something else. Two thirds (11 of 16 asked) indicated that it was something else or “other.” Moving, insecurity, itinerary, and negative impact on one’s health were among the reasons listed as why this work is undesirable. Coding the responses listed in the “other” categories did not provide clear results. Additionally, there was a lack of clarity on Q20 and Q36, “What type of leadership support did you find most helpful?” and Q22 and Q38, “What type of leadership support do you wish for?”

Also indicative of the need for further insight were Q23 and Q39, where those who said they wished for a form of post-training support they could not find indicated that financial and time constraints did not stand in their way. What stood in their way appeared to be “something else” or “other.” Ninety percent of participants who had completed Week One chose the “other” option, and 85 percent of those who had completed Week Two chose it. The researcher began to wonder if those who chose “other” might be willing to offer richer descriptions about their experience if they had someone to talk with about the obstacles they faced.

The results of those survey questions were ambiguous enough to cause the researcher to devote more time and energy to inquire further. Rather than conduct another survey, the researcher chose to listen to pastors tell their stories. An interview protocol was developed to track the results.

Interview Findings and Themes

The researcher decided to host a series of telephone interviews with a subset of the survey respondents. Fifteen Presbyterian clergy with recent transitional ministry experience and willingness to be contacted for additional information were invited to

participate in a brief telephone interview. Nine interviews were conducted in the early spring of 2022. To review a chart of interview participants, refer to table 3.4 in the previous chapter.

In the first three interviews, the researcher listened, took notes, and repeated specific items back to ensure accuracy of quotations. Table 4.3 shows a sample phone interview worksheet from the third interview that took place on February 24, 2022. It illustrates how quotes from the interview were recorded.

Table 4.3 Third Phone Interview Research Worksheet

Question	Corresponding survey question	Quotes
What draws you to serve as transitional or interim pastor?	Q18	I like the ever-changing challenges of transitional ministry; it puts you in the heart of the change moment.
What/if anything does not appeal to you?	Q19	I miss having deeper roots and care of a community, [I miss] the support and accountability of that.
What forms of support are most beneficial to you?	Q20	For me the most transformative support has been DMin work, being in an academic environment of learning works for me, it is more helpful than time with other transitional pastors. In my program we have done Strengths Finder, learned as a cohort with different people speaking into my life.
What forms are you currently practicing, or do you have in place?	Q20 Q36	Note 1:1 ‘shop talk’ with peers is life giving too.
What forms do you ‘wish’ for and why? [have you had these in the past]	Q22 Q38	I would like to see a Week Three opportunity that offered certification hours, a supervised ongoing component, something like group coaching, case studies, facilitated by those who are currently TP in this moment of ‘the great resignation’. It is different now. Pastors

		are tired and need to learn to lead adaptive change.
What impedes or limits your access to the 'wished' for forms of support?	Q23 Q39	mid councils can help by making short-term transitional ministry more financially stable. This is how we might get younger pastors to specialize in Transitional Pastors long term, it needs to be viable, sustainable.
Is there anything else you'd like to say/add?	Q40	I have a deep sense of call to 'not just pastoral transition work' but adaptive leadership work. Where can a specialist like me work? Maybe a position shared at a synod level, shared by presbyteries?

After three interviews, the researcher noted particular themes repeating from the survey. In subsequent interviews, a tally was made of the original 17 codes from the survey. Three new codes emerged about types of support unique to interviews: code Q for academia, code R for team of advisors, and code S for spiritual practices. These were useful in early stages of coding the interviews to gain insights about the forms of post training support most beneficial in transitional ministry settings. They also led to important understandings about what happens when pastors do not find the support they need.

At the end of the survey and interview coding, nine forms of support emerged from that data. Table 4.4 illustrates the forms of support that were included in the survey and additional forms that emerged from the interviews or were expanded by the interviews.

Table 4.4 Nine Forms of Support Identified by Study Participants (alphabetical order)

Type of support	Context
Academia	Not included in survey; referenced in interviews
Counseling or therapy	Survey multiple choice option
Leadership coaching	Survey multiple choice option
mid council Support	Survey multiple choice option
Peer learning group	Survey multiple choice option, expanded on in interviews
Spiritual direction	Survey multiple choice option
Spiritual Friendships	Survey multiple choice option for Week Two only
Spiritual Practices	Mentioned in survey and interviews narratives
Team of Advisors	Not included in survey; referenced in interviews

By expanding the narrative description, interviews provided an opportunity to listen to pastors describe the various types of support they access, to learn which are beneficial, and to identify any forms of support that the survey may not have mentioned.

The fourth interview was one of the longest interviews. Analyzing the data from the worksheet added insights about the type of support pastors find most beneficial and the importance they place on being in a community of practice, investing resources to spend time with peers, and knowing that their work matters to the church and to the ministry of the pastor that follows them. Table 4.5 excerpts quotes from an analytical memo about the fourth interview.

Table 4.5 Interview Four Worksheet Findings

Question	Survey question	Quotes
What draws you to serve as transitional or interim pastor?	Q18	I served several times as an interim pastor before taking the training Week One. Enjoyed the work. Wanted to learn the do's and don'ts of interim ministry before starting a new call in a challenging context. I was sort of disappointed with the training at Menucha. The training on self-care and assessment was good and valuable. The books read were helpful. But I wanted more practical points of application included in the training.
What/if anything does not appeal to you?	Q19	[Lack of support after training] I wish that after training there were groups to join. Not necessarily with that week's participants, but with pastors who have the same [Menucha] training. Pastors could be from different contexts, settings, or share similarities. A mix of ages and genders would be nice. [Alternatively] Geographic specific groups could be peer led with resources from mid council staff or a COM leader.
What forms of support are most beneficial to you?	Q20	I think it would be interesting to ask long term pastors that followed an interim pastor, what was accomplished that was helpful, and what might have been more helpful to do.
What forms do you 'wish for and why?	Q22	I would like to be in an Interim Pastors group that meets 10 times a year. I'd pay \$500/year to be in a group that was facilitated well, someone with experience.
What impedes or limits your access to the 'wished' for forms of support?	Q23	Access to outside resources. Like most pastors, I have funds to use for support built into my contract. I wish there were a list of resources, people, coaches, etc.
Is there anything else you'd like to say/add?	Q40	Appreciation for the research study

A desire to learn and a willingness to serve churches in challenging situations is often what draws a pastor to transitional ministry training. This pastor is not alone in expressing a desire for more practical points of application to be included in the training.

Perhaps the pastor’s request for post training support groups might be a viable way to offer pastors access to peers and experiment with a new model for leadership support.

At the end of nine interviews, twenty codes were identified as relevant to the pastors’ input. Seventeen were shared with the survey inputs, and three new codes were identified. Table 4.6 lists the combined survey and interview codes.

Table 4.6 Twenty Analytical Codes from Survey Q14 30 40 and Interviews

Code	Description	Code	Description
A	COVID/Online Issues	J	TMW feedback
B	Future Plans	K	Topic suggestions
C	General Survey comments	L	Training resources
D1	Issues - local church	M1	Training value - positive or general
D2	Issues - Presbytery / Denomination	M2	Training Value negative
E	Leadership	N	View of TMW
F	Outside Support	P	Why attended
G	Relationships	Q	Academia
H1	TMWorkshops challenges	R	Team of Advisors
H2	TMWorkshops financial / benefits	S	Spiritual Practices

Note: the letter “O” was not used because it looks like a zero.

Emerging Core Categories and Themes

In April 2021, an intermediate round of coding from survey and interview analysis yielded a new configuration of what had been twenty codes into thirteen

categories. The first seven categories were positive views about things that drew pastors to serve in transitional ministry. The next four were negative views about challenges in the transitional ministry context that discouraged pastors from accepting these calls. In subsequent rounds of focused coding over the next few months, two categories each split into two subcategories. This resulted in thirteen categories as seen in table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Interviews and Surveys Thirteen Categories

Category term	Description
Prepared	Presbytery expressed need for pastors to be prepared for short-term transitional ministry
Bi-vocational	Bi-vocational need and/or preference
Supportive presbytery	Supportive relationship with formal leadership in Presbytery including COM
Community	relationship with informal community of support
Drawn	Drawn to the work of short-term transitional ministry
Invited	Executive or General Presbyter invited the pastor to serve in short-term ministry
Academic	Academic programs
Creative	Creative, not bored, always learning
Uprooted	Uprooted from community
Expense	Expense to build and fund relationship of support outside of presbytery can be a burden
Second-class	Feel like a second-class citizen
Missing path	Do not see a path to specialization
New models	Need a national conversation about transitional ministry and/or new models

Listening to the vocational experience of Presbyterian pastors with short-term transitional ministry experience led to discoveries about the type of resources pastors are looking for but not finding. When asked in an interview, “What impedes your access to support?” five of nine pastors reported having funds to hire a coach or to join a group with a paid facilitator but not being able to find a suitable coach or a group to join. More than half of those interviewed also reported experiencing a loss of roots in a community of support and accountability each time they needed to move to take a new call.

Clergy in this arena feel like second class citizens and frequently express this attitude or belief as frustration or discouragement over failing to find a path to specialization or garnering reliable forms of meaningful support. Included in this core finding is the belief that transitional ministry is a calling without a path for specialization.

This study found that early in a career, a call to temporary ministry can be a pathway to ordination. Later, it can be a pathway to retirement when an installed call is not ideal. These are the most common entry points. But it is difficult for many reasons to sustain a vocational call to short-term transitional ministry over an extended period of time. In interviews with Presbyterian pastors, six of nine mentioned a desire to specialize in short-term calls but did not see a path to doing so. Pastors had a clear idea of the support they would like to find. A transitional pastor with considerable experience commented, “I would like to be with an interim pastors’ group that meets 10 times a year. I’d pay 500 dollars a year to be in a group that was facilitated by someone with experience.” This pastor had not found a group like this join. Five of nine pastors interviewed cited similar interests.

When asked, “What type of support do you need to stay in this work you seem to enjoy?” two thirds of the pastors interviewed resonated with this quote, “I need to know how to sustain a calling to transitional ministry. I’d like to specialize in this work. But it doesn’t seem feasible. This worries me. It was fun for a while; but it has downsides like no savings plan for sabbaticals.” Six of nine Presbyterian pastors interviewed do not find specialization in short-term calls sustainable. A PC(USA) Transitional pastor who has served eleven times in short-term calls added, “The longer I’m in this, the more I specialize, the harder it is sometimes to get churches to pay for my support needs. I’m tired of paying out of pocket to get support.” Five of nine Presbyterian pastors interviewed concurred that they are being underpaid for the work they do as short-term transitional leaders. One of the nine put it this way: “Moving and being chronically underpaid is my least favorite part. Said one of these pastors, I’ve moved 15 times. I’m not moving again.”

For some who serve in short-term calls, working bi-vocationally is an option that can provide a measure of stability. Health care chaplaincy, teaching, coaching, and consulting were among the professions represented in the interview sample. Two of nine Presbyterian pastors interviewed cited academia as a form of support while they served bi-vocationally. A bi-vocational pastor with decades of experience, who also serves as a church consultant, offered a possible new model: “I would like to see a Week Three opportunity that offered certification hours, a supervised component, something like group coaching, case studies, facilitated by those who are currently transitional pastors in this moment of the ‘Great Resignation.’” The entrepreneurial spirit of a bi-vocational leader suggests a characteristic common among those who find a path to specialization.

Analysis Leads to a Storyline

The initial rounds of survey coding were synthesized through a focused coding method common to grounded theory (Bryant and Charmaz 2007). Three focus categories emerged: codes about training, codes about transitional ministry support, and codes about other topics. The training category was the largest with eleven of the seventeen codes focused on training. The second largest focus was on ministry support available to pastors after training. The area with the least focus had to do with COVID and the need to move training online.

Of the eleven codes about training the greatest focus landed on Code J: feedback unique to Menucha and TMWorkshops. Seventy-five percent of survey respondents who took their training at this site wrote about it in one or more of the three essay questions. Wishing there had been more practical application and opportunities for networking and spending time with peers were prevalent as were statements of appreciation for the faculty's approach to leading change. Most responses about training across all sites were positive or general in nature. By contrast, less than 10 percent of survey takers made negative comments about training across all training sites.

Focused coding about post-training support for pastors highlighted their perceptions of transitional ministry, where they turn for help and seek supportive relationships, and their views of mid council and denominational support. For a detailed view of how survey comments were coded, see appendix E.

Survey questions about the second and fifth research topics—What draws (or does not draw) leaders to transitional ministry in congregations? and Which type of post-training support is most beneficial, and what forms of support are difficult to find?—had

low response rates. For instance, 59 percent of respondents who had completed Week One training did not answer Q20, “What type of leadership support did you find most helpful?” and 91 percent did not answer Q22, “What type of leadership support do you wish for?” Seventy-four percent of respondents who had completed Week Two training skipped the same questions (Q36 and Q38). Was it ambivalence on the part of the respondent, lack of transitional ministry experience, lack of clarity to the question being asked, or a rush to finish the survey? See appendix G for a detailed view and appendix F for a visual view.

With the additional input from interviews and successive rounds of analysis and memoing, eventually the use of focused coding saw the initial twenty codes coalesce into thirteen categories. Those categories combined to form a story about why pastors choose to do this work and under what conditions it is sensible or not for them to continue. By September 2021, the thirteen categories began to fit together as four core categories (Saldana 2016, 276). The four core categories began to feel weighty. Two core categories depicted positive views of transitional ministry, the most substantive being the positive aspects of sensing a call to this ministry and the second being positive forms of support. The other two core categories conveyed negative views of transitional ministry; the most substantive view identified the need for new models that offer a path to specialization in short-term calls and address the sense of injustice that causes pastors in this work to feel like second class citizens. Table 4.8 shows how the thirteen categories in Table 4.7 became four core categories using magnitude coding.

Table 4.8 Four Core Categories of Support Non-Support Sense of Call Positive or Negative

	Categories [inputs]	Code Words	Magnitude
Categories of support	Prepared [8] + Supportive presbytery [8] + Community [4]	Positive relationships with mid council staff and other leaders including COM, supportive ministry models, formal and informal relationships of support, team of advisors	20
Categories of call positive	Bi-vocational [3] + Drawn [10] + Invited [2] + Academic [1] + Creative [7]	Bi-vocational by choice, entrepreneurial, drawn to meet the needs of the church, sense of call to the work, fresh start, enjoyment, creativity, meaningful contribution to the church, help to deal with pain and conflict, begin to identify and move toward needed change	23
Categories of non-support	Uprooted [10] + Expensive [7]	Lack of stability, uprooted from community support care and accountability, underpaid, overworked, makes it hard to build and fund relationships of support.	17
Category of Call negative	New models [9] + second-class [7] + Missing path [5]	Need new models if transitional ministry is to have a path to specialization, Feel like a second-class citizen in PCUSA, Denomination does not support a path to specialization	21

At this point, the study began to reveal significant findings on research topics that lacked clarity from the survey. These findings included insights about what does not appeal to pastors about serving as transitional pastors (related to research topic two) and what might be missing in terms of leadership support (related to research topic five).

By November, these insights created a way to describe five types of support identified by Presbyterian pastors. Table 4.9 presents these five types in rank order from the most to the least supportive according to the study.

Table 4.9 Five Types of Support for Presbyterian Pastors Based on Survey and Interview Feedback.

Type of support (in rank order)	Descriptions (not in rank order)
Training support	Transitional Ministry training Other academic programs
Informal relationships of support	Self-leadership A Rule of Life, mentors Self-organized peer groups Role models Spiritual friends Family Congregational leaders especially ruling elders.
Formal relationships of support (often entail a corresponding expense)	Working with a team of advisors Being part of a facilitated peer group Working 1:1 or in a group with a leadership coach, spiritual director, counselor or therapist, consultant Going on retreats Being part of a professional network
Formal mid council support	Support from executive/general presbyter and other staff A COM liaison familiar with the pastor's ministry context, ministry models or programs Someone who regularly checks-ins Someone with knowledge of types of support and resources to recommend (preaching groups, spiritual directors, therapists, etc.), Someone who orients new pastors to the presbytery.
Formal Denominational support	Board of Pensions, benefits and programs such as CREDO Programs - Vital Congregations, New Worshiping Communities Research Services 2007 report, request updated information.

Association of Presbyterian Interim Ministry Specialists is missed by some.

Reference to Lutheran, Episcopal, and other traditions where clergy can live as specialists, contrasted with the associated risks in PCUSA such as unemployment between calls.

As noted in the previous chapter, numerous analytical memos were crafted by the researcher as part of working with grounded theory, including a memo comparing positive and negative views of transitional ministry. These were often expressed as wishes or needs. This particular memo that led to the five types of support was revisited and refined several times between April 2022 and January 2023.

Eventually the study led to the development of a storyline of (a) how pastoral formation for short-term transitional ministry takes place among PC(USA) pastors and (b) why it is increasingly difficult to find pastors willing to do this work. The storyline offers the church a better understanding of what draws pastors into short-term transition ministry, what sustains them in their calls, why they may leave, and what might be done to encourage clergy who wish to specialize in transitional ministry.

People come into short-term transitional ministry for a variety of reasons: preference to work bi-vocationally, a mid council leader invited them, early career or later career considerations, or a call-limiting event. Generally, they tend to choose and stay in this work because of a sense of a call or trust in a community of colleagues who support them. The code words that support this part of the story are as follows: meets the needs of the church, vocational calling, creative, entrepreneurial, coaching, peer learning groups, friendship, bi-vocational by choice, positive relationship and trust established with mid council leadership, outside advisors, new models welcomed.

The story continues: people who come into transitional ministry early or late in their careers can manage for a season, but mid-career pastors find the lack of stability and reliable forms of support hard to manage. Though some may wish to stay and build a long-term career, a path to specialization is hard to find unless one has a spouse or partner whose work life is more stable. This unfairly advantages some over others. Feeling like a second-class citizen is a common sentiment. The code words that support this part of the story are as follows: cannot specialize, instability, underpaid, expense of advisors, frequent relocation, bi-vocational by necessity, under-resourced, lack of meaningful connection with mid council leadership, new models needed.

The beauty of finding this storyline is that it can encourage experimentation with new models to help pastors sustain career pathways to specialization in transitional ministry. New models would strengthen the possibility that a sustained career is equitable and just. This will be explored further in chapter 5.

Findings about the Menucha Training Site and Online TMWorkshops

The survey asked four questions of those who took Week One or Week Two of Transitional Ministry training at the Menucha facility in Oregon or online via TMWorkshops between 2015- 2021. As with other parts of the survey, some questions appeared twice; participants were linked to one question if they attended Week One or its partner question if they attended Week Two. The four questions are as follows:

1. Why did you choose to take Week One at this site? (Q11 and Q27)
2. How satisfied were you with the content of Week One? (Q12 and Q28)
3. How likely are you to recommend Week One at this training site to others?
(Q13 and Q29)

4. If you could change one thing about Week One, what would it be and why?
(Q14 and Q30)

The researcher looked at the data about this training site through the lens of PC(USA) clergy who took part in the training. The data for Presbyterians showed the most popular answer to the question, “Why did you choose this training site?” was “faculty” for Week Two, replacing “recommendation of others” for Week One as the biggest factor in deciding why to take the training at this site. Overall, Presbyterian participants were satisfied with the training, but participants were somewhat less satisfied with Week Two than Week One. Most participants indicated they would recommend the training to others. Across both weeks, the top suggestions for improving training were to provide more practical applications. To see data visualization from PC(USA) Pastors see appendix F, figure 7.

Specifically, a first call Presbyterian pastor said, “My Menucha notebook is always open in my office. I review it before significant meetings. Keeping it in sight reminds me to keep calm and curious.” Another Presbyterian pastor who has taken more than 10 short-term calls said, “The training content was excellent. I think every pastor should take this training because in my mind all ministry is transitional. Our whole church is going through change, and we, as leaders, need to be prepared.” Likewise, a UCC Transitional Pastor commented, “I took the training because I am in a long-term pastoral position which is still transitional due to the nature of the church today.” Finally, a pastor in their second call enthusiastically shared, “Menucha gave me the confidence and credentials that I needed to start a new call. My presbytery gave me a model to follow. You’ve got to talk to my EP!” This feedback captured two essential findings

about this training site: it gives pastors confidence to get started in transitional ministry and also speaks to the positive relationship needed with mid council leadership.

Table 4.10 illustrates findings for the third research question: how satisfied are PC(USA) clergy with transitional ministry training offered at the study site? Specifically, the table shows responses from Q12 and Q28: how satisfied were you with the content of Week One [Week Two]? Week Two participants are slightly more satisfied with the training offered at Menucha or online through TMWorkshops from 2015-2021.

Table 4.10 How Satisfied Are Presbyterian Ministers with Menucha | TMWorkshops

Response option	Week One %	Week Two %
Extremely satisfied	43	42
Somewhat satisfied	34	38
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	9	8
Somewhat dissatisfied	14	13
Extremely dissatisfied	0	0

Conclusions, Reflections and Ethical Considerations

The aim of this chapter was to uncover what the data said using grounded theory. The goal was to discover the stories it might tell. The researcher found that the use of grounded theory suggested a storyline of how today’s pastors with transitional ministry training seek support for their on-going, broad-application learning. The study found that leaders are shaped for transitional ministry through training and a community of practice with colleagues, mentors, and others who support them in their call. The study specifically found that pastors with a desire to specialize in short-term transitional

ministry leadership find it frustrating to establish a stable community who support them in this denomination. For this reason, it is increasingly difficult for mid council leaders to find pastors willing to serve in short-term transitional ministry contexts.

Encouraged by this discovery, the researcher presents in chapter 5 reflections on the need for new models of short-term or temporary pastoral calls and formation of communities of practice for short-term transitional pastors. The project concludes with a pastoral letter to the church about what might be done with these findings.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Transitional ministry needs to transition, even if the outcomes aren't yet fully certain.

– Norman Bendroth, *Transitional Ministry Today*

Introduction

All calls to pastoral ministry today require transitional ministry skills. Some positions require specific skills and practices when serving for a shorter period. Having heard the opinions of transitional ministry practitioners on the study's topics, it is now time to consider what the church might do with what has been heard.

This chapter opens with a reflection on new models for short-term transitional ministry in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Next, the chapter briefly considers on the implications for the church of the study's examination of the first four research questions:

1. How likely are pastors with transitional ministry training to seek calls to serve as transitional pastors?
2. What draws leaders to transitional ministry in congregations?
3. How satisfied are they with transitional ministry training?
4. What, if anything would they change about training?

The remainder of the chapter focuses primarily on the fifth question: which type of post-training support is most beneficial, and what forms of support are difficult to find? When pastors in short-term calls were interviewed for this study, they had a lot to say about the difficulty of finding and sustaining forms of support that meet their needs. Having heard

the opinions of transitional ministry practitioners on these topics, it is now time to consider what the church might do with what has been heard.

New Models May Be Needed

A commitment to equity and justice in the hiring of short-term transitional leaders may require the exploration of new models. It can be expensive to establish a community of support, and this may limit the ability of transitional pastors serving smaller churches or in part-time calls to build the types of support they need. The expense of making trips back home to see friends and family can disproportionately impact those willing to relocate for a short-term call. Likewise, needing to depend on a spouse or partner to hold steady work or have resources, medical benefits, or income to bridge the gaps in transitional work is unfair. Additionally, the temporary nature of many uninstalled, short-term transitional positions may cause clergy to be overlooked for roles they may be interested in filling such as committee or commission work that may have a two- or three-year term commitment.

Very real personal losses are associated with making an ongoing commitment to this specific type of transitional ministry. These may include frequent moves, inadequate compensation, and lack of secure and ongoing work as compared with colleagues doing similar work in other denominations. The effects of leaving a community of care, support, and accountability to accept a new call are profound.

Mitigating these losses may be accomplished in part by providing a form of support outside of traditional supervision. According to the scholarship of Mary Kay DuChene and Mark Sundby (2022), pastors need a sacred, confidential, and safe place relationship with someone to whom they can bring all the joys and concerns of ministry.

Ideally this is someone with no formal supervisory oversight of pastors' employment (100). Jane Leach describes a similar practice called reflective supervision which creates space for significant ministry issues to arise (Leach 2020). Likewise Matt Bloom's longitudinal study of clergy wellbeing supports regular engagement with wise guides to help clergy imagine a better future and a better self toward which they can aspire (Bloom 2019, 135).

DuChene and Sundby's recommendations include judicatory leaders teaching congregations what support of the minister looks like including what good clergy boundaries are and why clergy need them to thrive in ministry (DuChene and Sundby 2022, 168). The authors encourage congregations to provide sufficient continuing education money in their budgets to be used at the pastor's discretion for leadership development, counseling, spiritual direction or support systems and groups. Further they encourage denominations to establish a pool of funds that clergy in under-resourced congregations can draw on. It is noteworthy that these authors encourage judicatory leaders to have these conversations during pastoral transitional times. I would add that clergy leading during times of pastoral transition are wise to model good boundaries, sabbath keeping, and planning for sabbaticals for their own sake and for the sake of their congregation.

The PC(USA) should explore new models for creating equitable and just hiring practices for short-term transitional leaders, especially those who serve marginalized communities, those who may not be ideally suited to relocate, or those who—for other reasons—are unwilling or unable to determine if a call is well-suited for their personal situation. As one transitional pastor who has served more than 10 short-term calls noted,

“the PC USA needs to have a conversation at the national level. With so many EPs retiring, and new executives starting, presbyteries differ about how interim pastorates work. It’s confusing and unjust.” Another transitional pastor, also with more than 10 short-term calls, shared, “I see levels of churches. Larger churches that can afford a full-time pastor, and smaller churches that cannot afford full time. We need to fund more full time calls through federation and other creative models.”

Responses to the survey indicated that pastors with transitional ministry training are likely to seek calls where these skills are needed (see table 4.1 in chapter 4). We have seen that pastors are drawn to this work largely because it is work the church needs to do, and they feel called to serve the church. As Presbyterian churches grow older and smaller, some pastors are finding vitality in new places, such as among retirees (Kim, 2023). Transitional work allows for curiosity and creativity: just what is possible here? Congregations may be older and smaller, but they do not necessarily lack vitality.

Pastors reported general satisfaction with the training modalities available today; training held at Menucha in the Pacific Northwest and online via TMWorkshops received an overall high satisfaction rating from survey respondents. If they were to change anything, it would be to offer more practical application. Perhaps this is an area where support from mid councils can intersect with training. Satisfaction ratings of other training sites were not part of the study.

This study found that clergy need to address their experience of feeling like second-class citizens by finding supportive relationships. The need for post-training support by transitional pastors is complex, and the types of support they need are interrelated. To address the complexity, this chapter references the five types of support

outlined in chapter 4 (table 4.10) to discuss how the Presbyterian Church might respond. Accordingly, the researcher's recommendations are based on the kinds of relationships pastors have with the different entities of the church. The five support types are listed below in rank order from most beneficial to least as reported by study participants:

1. training support
2. informal relationships of support
3. formal relationships of support
4. formal mid council support from the lead presbyter, other mid council staff, and others familiar with the pastor's ministry context
5. formal Denominational support

Recommendations by Type of Support

The first and foremost type of support explored and discussed with pastors in this study has been that of transitional ministry training and other academic pursuits. For 20 percent of interviewees, one of their primary communities of supportive colleagues emerged in higher education degree programs. This is also true for the researcher. Training is typically viewed as a formality, a credential, or a requirement. But training events also offer opportunities for people to meet new friends and create informal connections with colleagues. With care and intention, these relationships can blossom into supportive networks or colleague communities. In fact, down time to meet people was one of the most frequent requests made by participants. A PC(USA) pastor and leadership coach with experience in more than ten short-term calls reported a preference for in-person training because "being with people is key to networking and building the relationships are so important in this work." A similar view was heard from another

seasoned leader about presbytery gatherings when this pastor noted in an interview with exasperation, “Why are agendas always packed so tight? I need time to get to know other people. This happens best during down time.”

The second type of support is that of informal relationships. The researcher was surprised and delighted that this ranked significantly in the experiences of transitional pastors. Loneliness and isolation in pastoral leadership can be compounded in transitional roles (Barton 2014, 16; Barton 2018, 168 and 171; Chandler 2010; Leach 2020). It can be hard to keep up friendships when one serves in a challenging context or is required to move for employment. By the time one knows, trusts, and likes the people in a transitional ministry context, it can be time to move on. I was also surprised and rewarded by the discovery of research about friendship as ministry (Edgar 2016). Friendship with God and with others is a foundational support for ministry. Transitional Pastors are wise to nurture “portable” forms of support such as spiritual friendships, and peer relationships that do not depend on geographic proximity (Miles 2000). My recommendation to pastors and church leaders about informal relationships of support is this: practice healthy clergy boundaries and make time to nurture these good things.

Practices emerging from the third type of support, formal relationships with a third-party supervisor or a team of advisors, also vary greatly. They include relationships with coaches, spiritual directors, counselors and therapists, and other helping professionals. A lack of adequate support systems in the life of clergy contributes to isolation and loneliness, which inhibit personal spiritual renewal. Today’s pastors are wise to consider how spiritual practices through formal relationships might aid them in

avoiding exhaustion and burnout (Chandler 2010, 6; Oswald 1991, 201). A community of practice akin to Moses's council of seventy can provide needed companionship.

Vulnerable conversations with a trusted mentor can be game changing. A mentor, coach, spiritual director, and others can be used by God to remind us that we are not alone. We are meant to be in close relationship with those who sent us, or charged us, or left us to sort out the work yet to be done. Feelings of loneliness or isolation are common in pastoral ministry. It is necessary to have someone to turn to in trying times. Investing in being known by spiritual mentors secures a leader in a life-giving community (Hill 2001, 126; Andrews et al. 2009).

Consider a Titus-based model for transitional ministry. David Charles Miles notes the use of "Titus Teams " in transitional ministry to provide hands-on training with specific need-oriented coaching (Miles 2000). In broad terms, a Titus approach refers to formation that incorporates the input of leadership companions from "outside" a particular ministry context. Practicing vulnerability with a leadership mentor, coach, spiritual director, or someone in a similar role is necessary for the growth and well-being of transitional leaders (Bittinger 2007; Hagen 2008; Harris 2014; Herrington, Taylor, and Creech 2020).

Facilitated peer learning groups and coaching relationships are longed for by practitioners in this field. Finding one that fits can be challenging. Some pastors build a formal team of support in each new ministry context. Others find ways to bring their advisors with them from one congregation to another. Some maintain formal relationships over many years. Others have not yet found that ideal match. Many look to their networks of peers and colleagues for recommendations. Several respondents

mentioned wishing their presbyteries offered published lists of resources. This was especially true of pastors serving in new contexts. The researcher's primary recommendation to pastors is to commit to establishing formal relationships of support, as needed, in a way that blesses and delights their souls and to persevere until a beneficial team is built. Advice to mid council leaders is to provide opportunities for connection, learning, checking in, and being there for clergy in times of need (DuChene and Sundby 2022, 99). Support clergy seeking a third party for support. Most clergy need and yet do not have this type of formal relationship (DuChene and Sundby 2022, 101).

The fourth type of support comes from mid councils of the church. This topic drew the most ink in the data, meaning—without question—pastors had a lot say. Study participants mentioned mid council support as a source of both pride and frustration, with appreciation given to those who provide time and resources to build collegial relationships of trust with staff and other leaders. For those who find supportive relationships or know how to build them, this type of support is generally positive. In one instance, a pastor described a sense of relief that their presbytery had a transitional model to follow and a team of leaders that offered support. The EP of that presbytery mentioned, however, that some find the model restrictive as they feel it limits their creativity. The key seems to be that when a transitional pastor feels the support of their mid council, they can accept the hard tasks. The researcher's recommendation to mid councils is to be as honest and forthcoming as possible about what a pastor is stepping into and what resources and support the presbytery has to offer.

To strengthen clergy connection with one another, in the spirit of John Calvin's Company of Pastors, the researcher wondered if the practice of community covenant

making or other forms of corporate engagement or discernment might build trust among peers and transform the life of a presbytery. If so, training in how to do corporate discernment would be necessary (Barton 2012).

Informed by the prevalence of feedback about the role of mid councils in supporting transitional pastors, the researcher took an opportunity to ask her peers in a professional association of mid council leaders what they were doing in their locale to support transitional and interim pastors. Thirty-two leaders responded with a variety of approaches their presbyteries take to support pastors. Most indicated their presbyter and COM provide periodic check ins as their primary form of support. Nearly one third reported their presbyteries offer periodic gatherings for transitional and interim pastors. Financial support for training, special projects, and data and survey expenses was also mentioned. A few identified other resources such as sample feasibility and mission studies and pulpit supply support. Some reported their presbyteries provide transitional pastors with the same level of support as all other pastors and nothing more. My recommendation to mid council leaders is to let these pastors know you care, you see their work, and you have resources to offer as they seek to build a community of support. Being engaged with transitional pastors and alert to the support they are looking for matters significantly.

For the fifth type of support, denominational support, the researcher recommends that the Board of Pensions consider extending “gap coverage” from 30 to 60 days. Gap coverage refers to the time between pastoral calls when a gap in medical coverage may occur. An extension would go a long way toward addressing the Board’s commitment to justice in caring for all who serve the church (Board of Pensions, 2021). This is

especially important given the high need for short-term transitional pastors and the low supply of pastors willing to do this work.

The researcher encourages the church to find creative ways to ensure all pastors have opportunities to learn about and to apply the skills of transitional ministry. Learning can be accessed through formal training, such as Week One or Week Two or similar offerings. Alternatively, when traditional training formats are not available in a timely or accessible manner, less formal training options may be explored such as leadership coaching or facilitated peer learning groups.

Four Practical Pastoral Support Practices

Transitional ministry can be a demanding assignment (Robinson 2012, 17). One can at times feel like Moses crying out for support or like Titus wondering why in the world he signed up for this work. A storyline about support that took shape in this study is represented in the following short series of personal pastoral statements, which can be thought of as ways to build a measure of stability into one's vocational practice. Each statement is followed by a brief explanation.

1. *I know what it takes for me to build trust.* I know it will take time and intention to build trust before meaningful change in a congregation can happen. Meanwhile, my work is to stay curious, ask thoughtful questions, and listen to a variety of voices while I discern what to do next. I am patient, self-differentiated, and self-aware.

2. *I have someone to call.* When I get stuck and wonder what to do next, I have people in my life to talk with. I am also a colleague that others know they can call when they need support. We stay in touch.
3. *I am gathering a team of advisors.* These advisors may not know each other, but they know me. Over time, I have found their advice true and worthy of trust. My sources of influence may include someone who is at least a decade older than me and someone else who may be a good bit younger; one or more of these people are from a culture, ethnicity, or gender identity that is different from mine. They have expertise I do not have; I value their perspectives.
4. *I have a date scheduled on the calendar.* This final practice is a commitment to being known within a faith community. This means that I make plans to be with people who know me well. It means I show up for my colleagues as well.

These statements are best understood as self-leadership practices rooted in a theology of transitional ministry. When a pastor accepts this work, doing so as part of a community is wise and practical and reflects a commitment that is grounded in Scripture and historical practices of the church. Setting an intention around these practices may be incentivized or gamified if one finds it useful.

Opportunities for Further Study

More research is needed to understand how to sustain a vocational calling over a long haul of shorter-term positions. Some of the researchers and studies calling for further investigation into the efficacy of the current transitional ministry model include Susan Krummel (2019), Norman Bendroth (2012), Brian Craker (2021), and the Study of Effectiveness of Interim Pastors (PC USA Research Services 2007).

At the conclusion of this project at least five areas for further research become apparent. They include but are not limited to:

- Today's transitional leaders want connection with their transitional ministry training site in much the same way some clergy members stay connected with their seminary. If there is a single lesson learned from this study for training sites, it is to encourage or offer ways for alumni to stay connected with one another. Alumni are willing to help fund and facilitate creative ways for this to happen including expanding beyond the Week One/Week Two model to include post-training groups or retreats facilitated by training-site faculty or sessions self-led by peers. The researcher recognizes the extra burden this request places on a training site's faculty, but the discovery of this desire is worth noting and ought to be taken as a signal that faculty have built trust with alumni. Securing outside funding to explore this opportunity might be worthwhile. Conducting an Action Research project in conjunction with potential funding may yield important new insights (Cameron et al. 2010, 145).
- This project raises an important question about the future of training for transitional pastors. Might these skills be taught from the beginning of one's pastoral education (Bendroth 2015, 197)? If we believe that all ministry for the foreseeable future is transitional ministry, would we not anticipate that seminaries integrate adaptive and transitional theologies and skills into their curriculums? It is beyond the scope of this study to

make that recommendation, but it is a fair and reasonable hope. Further study of new training models could be useful.

- An ecumenical study by a team of researchers comprised of leaders from various denominations and traditions. The study should utilize transitional ministry models to gauge training satisfaction and post-training needs. For instance, do significant differences between the vocational experience and needs of clergy exist in different ecumenical approaches? If so, what can be learned from one another?
- Development of a model for congregations and/or presbyteries to onboard short-term transitional pastors in their first six months with a congregation. What frequency of check-ins are helpful? What forms of outside or third-party support are most beneficial? What rituals might be introduced to signify the losses and laments as well as the changes being explored? An empty chair in the pastor's study, a shepherd's crook in the sanctuary, or the arrival of a pop culture icon might welcome a playful spirit about the winds of change (Chastain 2018, study interview number 6).
- Exploration of the prevalence of women, younger pastors, and those in mainline ministries being more likely to be assigned to struggling churches (Religion News Service 2022). What forms of support might be offered to help sustain these pastors in transitional ministry roles?

Reflections Drawn from Study

The church can no longer rely solely on Week One and Week Two training to adequately prepare pastors for transitional ministry leadership. Nor should it rely on a cadre of retired pastors to provide the bulk of this work in short-term contexts. Such practices should be behind us. Today's transitional pastors need an ongoing community of supportive relationships that extend beyond formal training. Pastors come to transitional ministry for a variety of reasons, but they stay because of a sense of call and a community of colleagues that support them in their work.

Transitional pastors can feel like second-class citizens when an extended gap exists between calls and no formal source of support appears. Leaders with formal relationships that support transitional ministry, such as mid council and denominational leaders, can help by exploring new models of support for those who wish to specialize in this ministry. As the denomination continues its steep decline, there is much to learn from those who lead change that brings transformation or graceful decline. Either choice needs leadership to offer guidance and loving care.

Today's pastors are seeking support from leadership at all levels of church life. There is a role for each of us who has read this project to the end. Ruling elders, board members, trustees, presbyters, clerks, helping professionals, and professors with formal roles in church structures all play a part in creating nurturing environments where transitional pastors might thrive.

Conclusion

The final recommendations coming out of this study are to suggest six actionable steps mid council leaders and presbyteries can take: make training easy to access, share

resources, tell the truth with love, socialize, bridge call gaps, and try new things. I am going to illustrate these opportunities through an imaginative letter.

An Imaginative Letter to Mid Council Leaders about Transitional Pastors

Dear Colleagues,

No one knows better than we do about how difficult it is to find and retain short-term transitional pastors. We have our hunches about why this is so. When we are in need, we call neighboring mid councils to see if they are aware of anyone who might be available to help us out. It's tempting to cross our fingers and hope for the best.

I recently heard a colleague say the reason he goes to Transitional Ministry training events isn't just for the enjoyment of learning and being away from the office for a week; it's for recruitment! He goes to actively seek pastors who might serve in his locale. Now that's smart! But such extreme measures, as pleasurable as they may be, are not necessarily our best investment of time and energy.

I have spent the past two years listening to nearly 90 pastors share about their experience in transitional ministry. This study took place as part of my DMin program at Seattle University. Through an online survey and a series of follow up interviews, pastors with transitional ministry training shared their perspectives of what it is like to lead short-term transitional ministry today. With the help of participants from that study, a list of practical insights is offered to illustrate the support pastors are looking for in order to serve churches seeking their specialized skills and pastoral care. It considers what might

be done at each level of our church to create conditions for our people to thrive. This letter is a condensed version of the larger study that looks at our denomination through the lens of short-term transitional pastors' experience.

Six of the clearest indicators in the data are specifically actionable at the mid council level. From the broadest to the most specific these are: encourage all clergy to take transitional ministry training, identify support resources such as peer groups, be a presbytery known for telling the truth with love, take time to socialize, invest funds in bridging call gaps, and experiment in new ways of supporting pastors as they lead churches in change, decline, or closure.

Regardless of one's career stage, short-term transitional ministry training should be accessible to all. Thinking this work is meant only for those who are out of work or closest to retirement is a common misconception. That approach may have worked in an era past, but the needs of today's church will be better served by more clergy with transitional ministry skills.

If many pastors in your region are available for training, consider bringing the faculty of a training site to your locale. Join in as a learner. Encourage the Commission on Ministry (COM) to attend as well. Have fun. A playful attitude running alongside work is more helpful than you might imagine! Pastors who go to training on their own report wishing that they had taken training closer to home with people they will continue to see afterwards.

Building the skills needed to effectively lead change, decline, or closure can be expensive. Identify resources in your area that short-term transitional pastors need and

ensure their contracts have adequate professional expenses to cover these resources. According to the study, as many as a quarter of pastors currently doing this work report difficulty in locating the support they need. In terms of paid or professional services that are needed, leadership coaches, spiritual directors, counselors, and therapists are near the top of the list. But the most desired and the most difficult resource to find is a peer group. Some would prefer—and gladly pay—to be in a group facilitated by a professional skilled in creating space for the growth of trusting relationships. Investing time and resources in a community of learning with peers, and a team of advisors is indispensable. Fortunately, not all need to be paid.

Be a trustworthy source of information. Tell incoming pastors the truth about the ministry context they are stepping into. Tell it as you know it. Equip COM to be aware of and responsive to the needs of transitional pastors. If your typical ministry check ins take place on an annual basis, double the frequency in transitional contexts. Liaisons need an accurate picture of what is going on, and pastors need to know they have someone at COM on whom they can depend. Give the incoming pastor an accurate picture of the work ahead. Build trust in the system. Having someone to call who offers reliable help is one of the truest needs identified in the study. Ask them what it feels like to be in their shoes. More transitional leaders than not report feeling like a second-class citizen. Find out how this may be true in your setting.

Take time. Transitional pastors who relocate are hungry for connection. Be the first to meet them for a check in. Invite them to serve on a team. Pastors in the study report being lonely in new calls. I still remember the zeal with which a pastor said that

they simply wished meeting agendas included longer breaks so they could meet colleagues. Having a date on the calendar to meet up is a data driven request. It is more than being nice; it is necessary for well-being.

Know their needs. Let pastors know in practical ways that the presbytery has their future in mind. Help short-term transitional leaders save for a future sabbatical. This is something they wish more presbyteries would do. Worrying about having stable work is one of the primary reasons pastors leave transitional ministry. If the break between calls lasts longer than anticipated, consider offering a pastor temporary employment with the presbytery. Leverage their natural curiosity to address a thorny issue. Transitional leaders can be quick to sense a problem; they can be gifted conflict managers and project facilitators. Utilize their skills.

Finally, experiment with new models of support. What might it look like to adapt a strength your mid council already has to provide support to a transitional pastor? For instance, perhaps you know how to host first-call pastor cohorts. You might experiment with hosting a peer group for short-term transitional pastors. Or maybe your presbytery is known for creative web design. Imagine how useful a digital library of resources specifically curated for transitional ministry leaders could be. Do you have an abundance of spiritual directors? You might consider offering a safe place for sacred, confidential sharing of the joys and concerns of ministry.

Transitional leaders who enjoy short-term calls report that the career stability they need to move with relative ease between calls is among the hardest things to find. What if

your presbytery was known as the place where transitional pastors build the capacity to tolerate the tension between short-term calls?

May it be so.

Godspeed,

Shari

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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval

October 7, 2021

Shari Jackson Monson
School of Theology and Ministry
Seattle University

Dear Shari,

I'm following up on my Oct. 4 email regarding your exemption determination to provide this formal letter for your study files. Your study **How Leaders are Shaped for Unfinished Tasks: An Exploration of Pastoral Formation among U.S. Presbyterian Transitional Pastors** meets exemption criteria from IRB review in compliance with **45CFR46.104(d)**:

- 2) Research that includes only interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if (i) the investigator records information in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained (directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects); (ii) any disclosure of the data outside the research would not reasonably place subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or damage the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or (iii) the investigator records information in such a manner that the participant's identity can readily be ascertained, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review.

Note that a letter of exemption does **not** mean IRB "approval." *Do not include statements for publication or otherwise that the SU IRB has "reviewed and approved" this study; rather, say the SU IRB has "determined the study to be exempt from IRB review in accordance with federal regulation criteria."* Please retain this letter with your study files.

If your project alters in nature or scope, contact the IRB right away. If you have any questions, I'm happy to assist.

Best wishes,



Andrea McDowell, PhD
IRB Administrator

cc: Dr. Mark Taylor, Faculty Adviser

APPENDIX B

Site Permissions

Dear [name]

Your name and email address were shared with me by the administrator of TM Workshops, an online Transitional Ministry training program.

From 2015-2019 the leadership team of TM Workshops, led weeklong Transitional Ministry training programs at the Menucha Retreat Center.

A note from Rev. Scott Lumsden, 'I have long wondered about the impact of our training on the vocational lives of participants. The teaching faculty and I look forward to hearing what participants have to say about this through the survey Shari is conducting.'

- To learn more about this survey and research project see the Informational Letter attached.
- To consent to participate, [click here](#) to begin the survey.

Warm regards,

Rev. Shari Jackson Monson

Doctor of Ministry Candidate

Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry

APPENDIX C1

Transitional Ministry Training and Support Survey Informational Letter

Hello!

My name is Shari Jackson Monson. I am collecting research as part of my Doctor of Ministry program at Seattle University under faculty advisor Dr. Mark Lloyd Taylor. I would like to invite you to participate in a survey described below.

Description of the Project

You are being invited to participate in an online survey. This survey will be used to explore the impact of transitional ministry training and leadership support on those serving as transitional and interim pastors today. The survey asks for additional input from those who attended Week 1 and/or Week 2 through TM

Workshops | Menucha. I hope that this research will a). help me develop practical resources to support pastors serving in transitional leadership roles, and b). offer helpful feedback to the faculty of TM Workshops.

Procedures

If you decide to take part in this online survey, you will be asked to:

- 1) Answer four initial questions about your denominational affiliation, ordination, and current leadership role.
- 2) answer several questions related to Transitional Ministry Training Week 1 and Week 2, and for participants of TMWorkshops | Menucha training sites, there are four additional questions,
- 3) answer several questions about the type of leadership support you have found helpful following your training.
- 4) Finally, there is an optional short essay question that invites you to share anything else you wish to offer about transitional ministry training and leadership support.

All of this will take about 15-20 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain confidential.

Risks or discomfort: Participation in this study is expected to provide no more than minimal risk or discomfort. You may skip any question if you wish.

Benefits of this study: Although there will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study, the researcher may learn more about what is needed to sustain a long-term pastoral commitment to leading transitional ministry today. If you would like to receive a summary of the research results once the study is complete, you may email the researcher (monsons@seattleu.edu).

Confidentiality

You will not be identified in any reports on this study. Your participation is completely confidential, including your email address, which will not be recorded by the online survey program. The Institutional Review Board or university and government officials responsible for

monitoring this study may inspect all records related to this research.

If you have any questions about this research project, please call me at 253.405.2795 or email at monsons@seattleu.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, please direct them to irb@seattleu.edu.

Thank you for taking time to learn more about this survey.

APPENDIX C2

Informed Consent for Phone Interviews

Email sent to 15 Survey Respondents

2.21.2022

Dear Survey Respondent,

First, I want to thank you for your participation in the "Transitional Ministry Training and Support Survey" in the fall. Nearly 90 pastors and mid council leaders completed the survey.

Respondents offered valuable insights about training and about their sense of call to interim and transitional ministry.

Interestingly, the data about post-training support was not as robust as I had hoped it might be.

You are one of fifteen pastors I am contacting for a follow up interview to learn more about the types of post-training support you have, or wish you had, as you guide transitional ministry.

To learn more about this, and to consent to the interview, please read the attached letter.

The interviews will be conducted on the phone and will take about 15 minutes depending on your availability. To schedule an interview use this link or reply to this email.

Warm regards,

Rev. Shari Jackson Monson

Doctor of Ministry Candidate

Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry

Informed Consent Letter Approved by IRB 2.14.2022

Welcome to the Transitional Ministry Support Interview,

My name is Shari Jackson Monson. I am collecting research as part of my Doctor of Ministry program at Seattle University under faculty advisor Dr. Mark Lloyd Taylor.

Your participation is requested based on three criteria:

1. PC USA Pastor,
2. serving as a transitional or interim pastor, and
3. who has completed Week One of Transitional Ministry Training at the Menucha training site in Oregon or online through TMWorkshops.

Participating in this interview will take about 15 minutes. Participation is voluntary. You don't have to participate, and you can stop at any time, even after you have agreed to this informed consent.

Please take time to read this entire form before deciding whether to agree to be interviewed.

Description of the Project

You are being invited to participate in an interview by phone. This interviewer will ask seven questions related to post-training support from the “Online Transitional Ministry Training and Support Survey” you completed in the fall of 2021.

Procedures

If you decide to take part in this interview, you will be asked to:

- 1) Agree you have read a reminder that your participation is voluntary and confidential.
- 2) Affirm that you meet the criteria
- 3) Answer as many of the seven questions as you wish.

All of this will take about 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain anonymous.

Risks or discomfort: Participation in this study is expected to provide no more than minimal risk or discomfort. This means that you will probably not experience it as any more troubling than your normal daily life. If you feel uncomfortable, you may skip any question or stop the interview at any point.

Benefits of this study: Although there will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study, the researcher may learn more about what is needed to sustain a long-term pastoral commitment to leading transitional ministry today. If you would like to receive a summary of the research results once the study is complete, you may email the researcher (monsons@seattleu.edu).

Confidentiality

Your name will not be identified in any reports on this study. Your participation is confidential. The Institutional Review Board responsible for monitoring this study may inspect all records related to this research.

Voluntary participation and withdrawal

Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to be in this study. If you decide to participate in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions.

Questions, Rights and Complaints

If you have any questions about this research project, please call Shari Jackson Monson at 253.405.2795 or email at monsons@seattleu.edu.

One copy of this informed consent document will be kept together with the research records of this study. Also, you are encouraged to print and keep a copy for yourself.

Consent statement

By scheduling an interview, you agree to the following statement:

I have read the information given above about the study and my rights as a participant. Shari Jackson Monson has offered to answer any questions I may have concerning the study. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without losing any benefits I would otherwise receive. I am 18 years of age or older and hereby consent to participate in the study.

APPENDIX C3

Blog Letter of Consent to Participants

Researchers Blog Post

Letter of Consent to Participate in the Survey

Posted on Interim By Design Website

www.interimbydesign.com

Let's Discover How Leaders are Shaped for Transitional Ministry

Every church will go through transition. This cannot be escaped. Transitional ministry is always happening around us. We almost don't see it. But we need to recognize its importance of focusing on hard seasons of ministry and we need pastors who are prepared to lead the change it brings.

There is a gap between the need for transitional pastors and our commitment to support their formation for ministry.

I want to understand what it takes to bridge this gap. This curiosity has been my constant companion throughout my Doctor of Ministry program. I am beginning to form some convictions about it, but before the task is complete I want to hear what you think.

To capture your input, I have developed a survey tool to explore what draws, equips, and sustains pastors to this work.

If you decide to take part in this online survey, you will be asked to:

- 1) Answer four initial questions about your denominational affiliation, ordination, and current leadership role.
- 2) answer several questions related to Transitional Ministry Training Week 1 and Week 2, and for participants of TMWorkshops | Menucha training sites, there are four additional questions,
- 3) answer several questions about the type of leadership support you have found helpful following your training.
- 4) Finally, there is an optional short essay question that invites you to share anything else you wish to offer about transitional ministry training and leadership support.

All of this will take about 15-20 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain confidential. Participation in this study is expected to provide no more than minimal risk or discomfort. You may skip any question if you wish.

Although there will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study, as a researcher I may learn more about what is needed to sustain a pastoral commitment to leading transitional ministry today.

If you would like to receive a summary of the research results once the study is complete, you may email me at monsons@seattleu.edu.

You will not be identified in any reports on this study. Your participation is completely confidential. The Institutional Review Board or university and government officials responsible for monitoring this study may inspect all records related to this research.

If you have any questions about this research project, please email me at monsons@seattleu.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, please direct them to irb@seattleu.edu.

To consent to participate and take the survey click here. Or copy this into your browser https://seattleu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b0ZL1IjVxLwZsYC

APPENDIX D
Survey Questions

- Q1 My denominational affiliation is:
- PC USA Presbyterian
 - ELCA Lutheran
 - UCC United Church of Christ
 - Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
 - Other
- Q2 Have you served in other denominations? Yes. No.
- Q3 Are you an ordained minister? Yes. No.
- Q4 at ordination I was in my:
- 20's
 - 30's
 - 40's
 - 50's
 - Older than 59
- Q5 My role in ministry today is: [Pick one]
- Seeking a Call
 - Serving as a TP designated, temporary or installed
 - Serving as an Interim Pastor
 - Serving in a validated ministry
 - Retired
 - Other
- Q6 How many times have you served as a Transitional Pastor or Interim Pastor?
- 1-2 times
 - 3-9 times
 - More than 10 times
- [Q7 there was no such number in the survey.]
- Q8 Have you completed Transitional Ministry Training Week 1? Yes. No.
- Q9 At which training site did you attend Week 1? Choose one of the eleven sites listed.
- Q10 My Week 1 training took place In person or Online. Choose one.

Note re Q11, 12, 13, and 14: these were asked only of those who indicated that they took Week 1 training at TMWorkshops | Menucha in Q9

Q11 Why did you choose to take Week 1 at this site? Choose as many as apply.

- Content
- Faculty
- Recommendation of a friend/colleague/Mid Council leader
- Date or time of year
- Destination
- Other of 4 answers, 3 said because it was offered online

Q12 How satisfied were you with the content of Week 1

- Extremely satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Extremely unsatisfied

Q13 How likely are you to recommend Week 1 at this training site to others?

- Extremely likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neither likely/unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

Q14 If you could change one thing about Week 1, what would it be and why?
Long answer.

Q15 Were you serving as a transitional or interim pastor when you took Week 1? Yes. No.

Q16 Are you serving as a transitional or interim pastor today? Yes. No.

Q17 When seeking your next call, how likely are you to serve as a transitional pastor?

- Extremely likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

- Q18 What draws you to serve as a transitional pastor? Choose as many as apply. Asked if Q17 a. or b.
- I enjoy guiding congregations in seasons of transition
 - I sense a call to lead change
 - My wages and compensation are adequate
 - I have a community of colleagues who support me in this work
 - Other
- Q19 What does not appeal to you about serving as a transitional pastor? Choose as many as apply. Asked if Q17 d. or e.
- I do not enjoy guiding congregations in seasons of change
 - I do not sense a call to lead change
 - Wages and compensation are inadequate
 - I do not have a community of colleagues who support me in this work
 - Other
- Q20 | Q36 Following Week 1 What type of leadership support did you find most helpful? Choose as many as apply.
- Spiritual direction
 - Leadership coaching
 - Counseling or therapy
 - Peer learning group
 - Mid Council or other denominational support
 - Other
- Q21 | Q37 Following Week 1 was there a type of leadership support you wished for, but did not find? Yes. No.
- Q22 | Q38 What type of leadership support do you wish for? Choose as many as apply.
- Spiritual direction
 - Leadership coaching
 - Counseling or therapy
 - Peer learning group
 - Mid Council or other denominational support
 - Other
 - Spiritual friendships [week 2 only]
- Q23 | Q39 What most inhibits your access to this type of support? Choose one.
- Financial constraints

- Time constraints
- Other, please specify
- Mid Council lack of support
- Can't find a local group

Q24 Have you completed Transitional Ministry Training Week 2?
Yes. No.

Q25 If yes, At which training site did you attend Week 2? Choose one of the eleven sites listed.

Q26 My Week 2 training took place in-person or online. Pick one.

Note re Q27, Q28, Q29, and Q30: asked only of those who indicated that they took Week 2 training at TMWorkshops | Menucha in Q25

Q27 Why did you choose to take Week 2 at this site? Choose as many as apply.

- Content
- Faculty
- Recommendation
- Dates or time of year
- Destination
- Other

Q28 How satisfied were you with the content of Week 2? Likert Scale

- Extremely satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Extremely unsatisfied

Q29 How likely are you to recommend Week 2 at this training site to others? Likert Scale

- Extremely likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neither likely/unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

Q30 If you could change one thing about Week 2, what would it be and why?
Long answer.

- Q31 Were you serving as a transitional or interim pastor when you took Week 2?
Yes. No.
- Q32 Asked if Q24 Yes. Are you serving as a transitional or interim pastor today?
Yes. No.
- Q33 When seeking your next call, how likely are you to serve as a transitional pastor?
Likert Scale
- Extremely likely
 - Somewhat likely
 - Neither likely nor unlikely
 - Somewhat unlikely
 - Extremely unlikely
- Q34 What draws you to serve as a transitional pastor? Choose as many as apply. Asked if Q33 a. or b.
- I enjoy guiding congregations in seasons of transition
 - I sense a call to lead change
 - My wages and compensation are adequate
 - I have a community of colleagues who support me in this work
 - Other
- Q35 What does not appeal to you about serving as a transitional pastor? Choose as many as apply. Asked if Q33 d. or e.
- I do not enjoy guiding congregations in seasons of change
 - I do not sense a call to lead change
 - Wages and compensation are inadequate
 - I do not have a community of colleagues who support me in this work
 - Other
- Q36 see Q20 above for Week 1 and Week 2 comparisons
- Q37 (see Q21) Is there a type of leadership support you wish for or have not found?
Yes. No. If yes, ask Q38.
- Q38 (see Q22) What type of leadership support do you wish to find?
- Q39 (see Q23) What most inhibits your access to this type of support?

Q40 Is there anything else you'd like to say? Long answer.

APPENDIX E

Survey Narrative Coding for Q14, Q30, and Q40

#	Code Theme	TWM Responses by Question			TMW Total/ Respondent	TMW %	Trad. #	Trad. %	Total # TMW & Trad	Total % TMW & Trad
		Q14	Q30	Q40						
A	COVID/Online Issues	2	2	3	5	12.5%	0	0%	5	8.8%
B	Future Plans	1	3	8	10	25.0%	2	11.8%	12	21.0%
C	General Survey Comment			5	5	12.5%	1	5.9%	6	10.5%
D1	Issues – Local Church	1	3	3	5	12.5%	3	17.6%	8	14.0%
D2	Issues – Presbytery/ Denomination	1	2	8	8	20.0%	6	35.3%	14	24.6%
E	Leadership	2	4	7	9	22.5%	1	5.9%	10	17.5%
F	Outside Support	2	2	9	9	22.5%	3	17.6%	12	21.0%
G	Relationships	1	3	8	11	27.5%	0	0%	11	19.3%
H1	TM Challenges Difficulties	2	2	4	6	15.0%	3	17.6%	9	15.8%
H2	TM Financial/Benefits	1	1	1	1	2.5%	2	11.8%	3	5.3%
J	TMW Feedback	11	13	24	30	75.0%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
K	Topic Suggestion	7	3	8	13	32.5%	2	11.8%	15	26.3%
L	Training Resources	1	1	5	4	10.0%	0	0%	4	7.0%
M1	Training Value - Positive or General	4	5	19	22	55.0%	7	41.2%	29	50.9%
M2	Training Value - Negative	2	0	4	6	15.0%	1	5.9%	7	12.3%
N	View of TM	2	3	13	13	32.5%	8	47.1%	21	36.8%
P	Why Attended	1	1	6	6	15.0%	1	5.9%	7	12.3%

Note: TM = Transitional (Interim) Ministry; TMW = Transitional Ministry Workshop (Menucha)
#14-40 Totals – TMW = 40; Trad = 17; Total = 57

APPENDIX F

PC(USA) Pastors Data Visualization Figures 1-10

Most participants attended Week 1 and Week 2 in person.

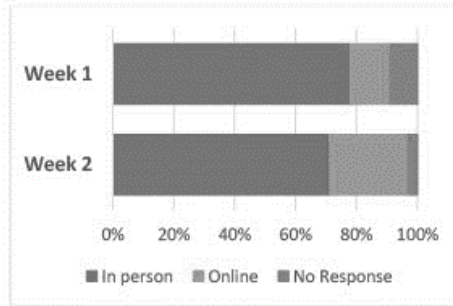


Figure 1

More Week 2 participants were transitional or interim pastors at the time of the training.

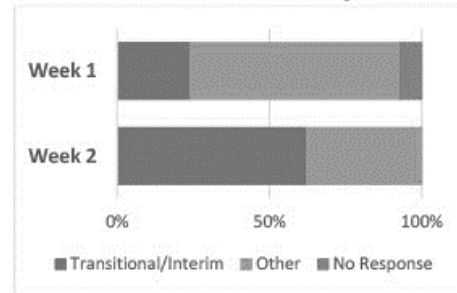


Figure 2

For the Week 2 training, Faculty replaced Recommendation of Others as the biggest factor in deciding where to take the training.

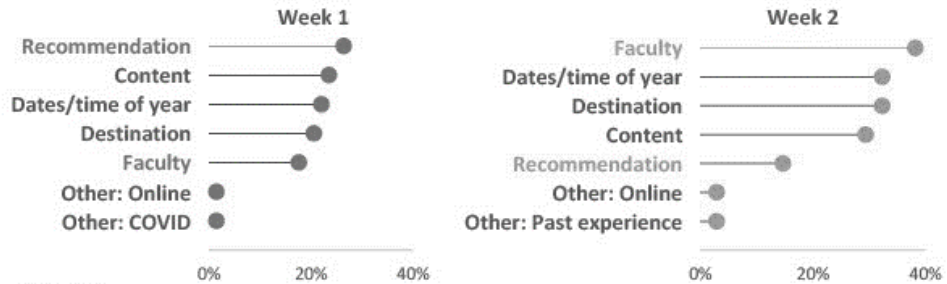


Figure 3

After the Week 2 training, participants seemed to have a better sense of whether their next position would be as a transitional pastor, with more participants providing responses in the extremes.

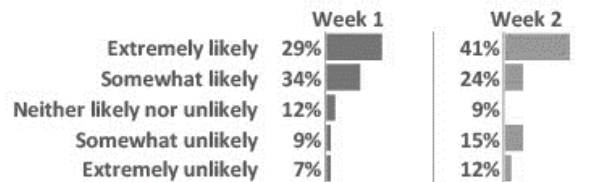


Figure 4

PC USA Pastors

PARTICIPANT PERCEPTIONS OF TRAINING

Overall, participants were satisfied with the training. But participants were somewhat less satisfied with the Week 2 training compared to the Week 1 training.

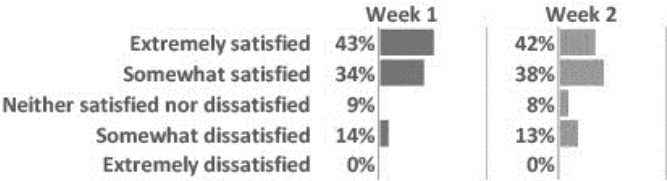


Figure 5

Most participants would recommend the training to others. But participants were slightly less likely to recommend the Week 2 training than the Week 1 training.

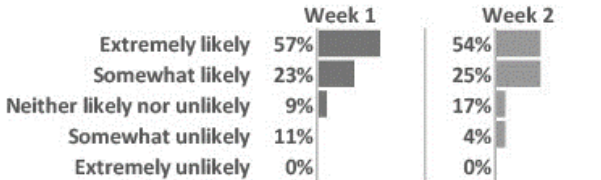


Figure 6

Across both weeks of training, the top suggestion for improving the training was to provide more practical application.

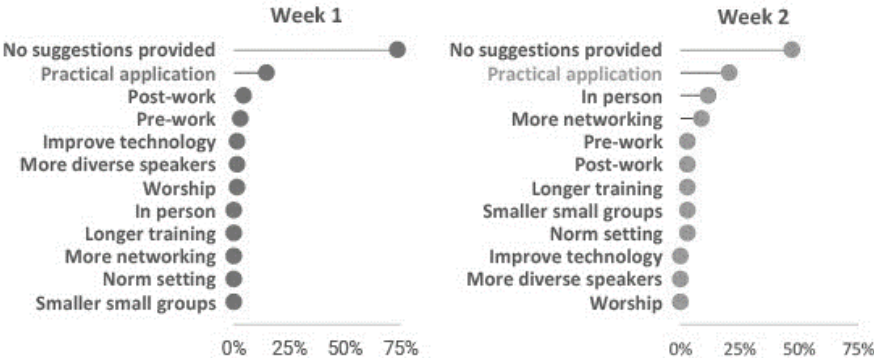


Figure 7

PC USA Pastors

TYPES OF LEADERSHIP SUPPORT DESIRED

Midcouncil or other denominational support and peer learning groups were the types of leadership support participants found most helpful after each training.*

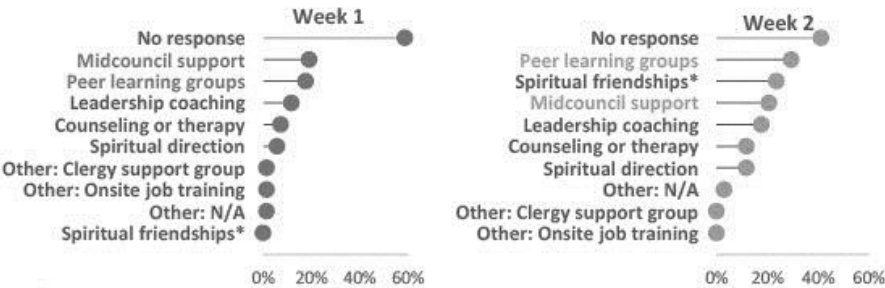


Figure 8

More participants reported wanting a type of leadership support they could not find after Week 2 than after Week 1.†

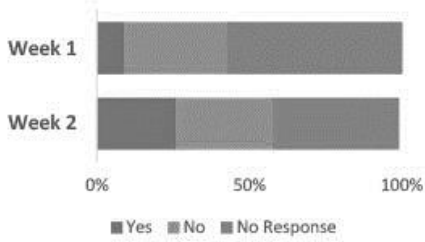
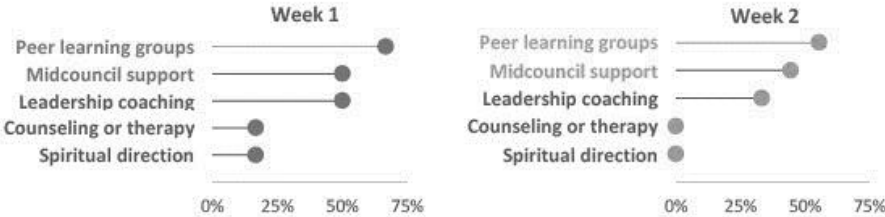


Figure 9

Peer learning groups and midcouncil support were the two types of leadership support most desired but not found.



* "Spiritual friendships" was not offered as a response option for the Week 1 training.
 † Only respondents who reported being a transitional or interim pastor at the time of the survey were asked this question.

Figure 10

APPENDIX G

Survey Questions with Responses and Analysis

Q1 My denominational affiliation is:
(88 responses)

PC USA Presbyterian	78%	78%
ELCA Lutheran		6%
UCC United Church of Christ		5%
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)		2%
Other, Episcopalian, United Methodist, American Baptists, Reformed Church in America, ECO Presbyterian		7%

Q2 Have you served in other denominations?

Yes 30%
No 70%

Q3 Are you an ordained minister?

Yes 100%
No 0%

Q4 At ordination I was in my:

20's	34%
30's	33%
40's	20%
50's	12%
Older than 59	2%

Q5 My role in ministry today is:

Transitional Pastors (all designations)	38%
Interim Pastors	27%
Validated and/or MidC leaders	14%
Seeking a Call	5%
Retired	11%
Other	5%

Q6 How many times have you served as a Transitional or Interim Pastor? (asked if Q5 indicated the pastor as currently serving as IP or TP= 44)
32 responses

1-2 times	53%
3-9 times	28%
More than 10 times	19%

Q20 Responses by Number of Times Served as Transitional Pastor*

	1-2 times	3-9 times	10 or more times
Counseling or therapy	2	2	0
Leadership Coaching	5	1	0
Mid Council Support	4	3	1
Peer Learning Group	4	1	2
Spiritual Direction	3	1	0
Other: NA	1	0	0
Other: Touching base with other interim pastors (not formal peer learning group)	1	0	0
Other: Clergy support group	0	1	0
No response	2	1	0
Number of Respondents	14	6	2

Q36 Responses by Number of Times Served as Transitional Pastor*

	1-2 times	3-9 times	10 or more times
Counseling or therapy	1	1	0
Leadership Coaching	3	1	0
Mid Council Support	2	3	0
Peer Learning Group	2	3	1
Spiritual Direction	1	1	1
Spiritual Friendships	2	2	1
Other: NA	1	0	0
Other: Touching base with other interim pastors (not formal peer learning group)	0	0	0
Other: Clergy support group	0	0	0
No response	1	1	0
Number of Respondents (who had completed Week 2 training)	9	6	1

*There weren't enough responses to check for statistically significant correlations, but by eyeballing it, it does not appear that there are significant differences between the 3 groups.

Qualtrics note from a research collaborator: the response in the Excel form should mean "1-2 times" actually reads "more than 2 times," and the response that should mean "10 or more times" actually reads "more than 10 times." These may be errors in the survey response options or an error in copying the responses into Excel. If it's an error in the response options, the results should be taken very lightly as we don't know if people choose their responses by making an assumption about what was meant or by what was actually written. (E.g Did they see that the first response option was "more than 2 times" and the next option was "3-9 times" and assume the first option should have been "1-2 times" and then choose accordingly? Or did they answer based on what was written, with those serving more than 2 times randomly deciding whether to select the "more than 2 times" or "3-9 times" options?)

Q7 (There was no such number in the survey.)

Q8 Completed Transitional Ministry Training Week 1

Yes 96% of 84 responses

Q9 At which training site did you attend Week 1 (of 77 responses) adjusted for accuracy
TMWorkshops | Menucha 52% = 40 people

Zephyr Point NV	12%
Midwest Initiative MO	5%
Other places	31% (each additional site less than 5%)

Q10 My Week 1 training took place:
(of 76 responses)

In person	87%
Online	13%

Note: Q11, Q12, Q13, and Q14 asked only of those who indicated that they took Week 1 training at TMWorkshops | Menucha in Q9 40 people in total took Week 1 at TMW | Menucha

Q11 Why did you choose to take Week 1 at this site? Choose as many as apply.
When adjusted for accuracy, adding 1 to destination, of 84 responses

Content	20%
Faculty	14%
Recommendation of a friend/colleague/Mid Council leader	24%
Date or time of year	19%

Destination	19%
Other of 4 answers, 3 said because it was offered online	5%

Q12 How satisfied were you with the content of Week 1?
37 responses

Extremely satisfied	41%
Somewhat satisfied	38%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	8%
Somewhat dissatisfied	14%
Extremely unsatisfied	0%

Q13 How likely are you to recommend Week 1 at this training site to others?
37 responses

Extremely likely	60%
Somewhat likely	22%
Neither likely/unlikely	8%
Somewhat unlikely	11%
Extremely unlikely	0%

Q14 If you could change one thing about Week 1, what would it be and why? Long answer. See coding for Q14 in Appendix E.

Q15 Were you serving as a transitional or interim pastor when you took Week 1? 76 responses

Yes	28%
No	72%

Q16 Serving as a transitional or intermim pastor today
80 responses

Yes	49%
No	51%

Q17 When seeking your next call, how likely are you to serve as a transitional pastor?
79 responses (Week 2 comparison see Q33)

Extremely likely	37%
Somewhat likely	33%
Neither likely nor unlikely	11%

Somewhat unlikely	11%
Extremely unlikely	8%

Q18 What draws you to serve as a transitional pastor? Choose as many as apply.

Q18 was asked if Q17 a or b. 45 responses.

I enjoy guiding congregations in seasons of transition	42%
I sense a call to lead change	32%
My wages and compensation are adequate	5%
I have a community of colleagues who support me in this work	10%
Other	14%

Other responses: I'm never bored, I get to be creative, I am always learning, nearing retirement but wanting to continue to serve short term positions, God's calling, following my wife's call, and I knew this could be a possibility, geographically limited, I like to be involved in healing, there is no long term commitment.

Q19 What does not appeal to you about serving as a transitional pastor? Choose as many as apply. Asked if Q17 d. or e. 16 responses

	Week 1	Week 2
I do not enjoy guiding congregations in seasons of change	13%	0%
I do not sense a call to lead change	13%	8%
Wages and compensation are inadequate	6%	8%
I do not have a community of colleagues who support me in this work	0%	0%
Other	68%	85%

Week 1 other responses: Hate moving, not my gift, insecurity and itinerancy is no longer sustainable for me, I have served as an 'after pastor' - after clergy misconduct, and it badly affected my health, I will be seeking other ministry, I am mostly retired and not interested in a call beyond a few hours a week, medical reasons may limit my ability, it is unlikely because I will be retiring in 2022, I don't want a church other than the one I'm in, retiring, I am not currently called to serve in a congregational setting. I love serving at the regional level.

Hunch: Q19 may have lacked artful asking. 68% 'other' (Week 1) and 85% 'other' (Week 2) responses may mean that the options were not rich enough, indicating to me that there may be more to learn through a type of inquiry.

Hunch 2: perhaps respondents wished to put responses in their own words. To choose a

pre-selected option may be impersonal.

CODES Q19 include: see also Q35 Week 2

- At or nearing retirement
- Tired of moving, insecurity, low wages
- Poor health/medical issues
- Want to be more settled, tired of learning people’s names and finding doctors, and having to leave and start over....
- Like serving where I am, and plan to stay

Q20 Week 1 (60 responses) and comparison Q36 Following Week 2 (56 responses): What type of leadership support did you find most helpful? Choose as many as apply.

	Week One	Week Two
Spiritual direction	18%	18%
Leadership coaching	15%	11%
Counseling or therapy	10%	29%
Peer learning group	26%	26%
Mid Council or other denominational support	23%	18%
Other	7%	2%

Other includes: informal peer group of pastors; presbytery clergy support group; I touched base with other interim pastors which was helpful, especially in my first interim call.

Hunch: those in counseling or therapy rises substantially with time, access to this health benefit should be taken into consideration as a pastor continues to serve multiple congregations in transition.

Q21 (39 responses) Following Week 1 | Following Week 2 Q37 (27 responses) was there a type of leadership support you wish for, but did not find?

	Week 1	Week 2
Yes	28%	48%
No	72%	59%

Hunch: following week 2 pastors are more aware of their need for support

Q22 | Q38 What type of leadership support do you wish for? Choose as many as apply.

	Week 1	Week 2
Spiritual direction	10%	0%
Leadership coaching	23%	20%

Counseling or therapy	5%	0%
Peer learning group	33%	40%
Mid Council or other denominational support	24%	40%
Other	7%	2%
Spiritual friendships (week 2 only)		18%

Hunch: those not in peer learning groups wish to find one to join. Starting peer groups may offer the greatest impact (lowest hanging fruit). Chapter 5

Q23 | Q 39 What most inhibits your access to this type of support? Choose one.

	Week 1	Week 2
Financial constraints	20%	10%
Time constraints	0%	0%
Other, please specify	20%	12%
Mid Council lack of support	10%	36% (4 comments)
Can't find a local group (5 comments)	50%	36% (4 comments)

Codes for “other” Week 1 (10 responses)

- I can't find it, it's not availability 3
- No local group of peers going interim work as a choice
- Mid Council support not offered
- Resources unavailable, good coaches and programs are rare

Codes for ‘other’ Week 2 (11 responses)

- Lack of availability, proximity - no groups in my area
- The health of COM and presbytery, little understanding of the role of interim or Transitional Ministry from mid council when conflict arises
- Good coaching is not available
- I'm new, still trying to locate supports

Hunch: with more experience, as assumed in Week 2 comments, comes greater awareness of the need for Mid Council support. Idea: add “how to build trust and find support at Mid Council as a topic to training.

See interview 1 written reflection about how [N] works to strengthen the relationship between congregations and Mid Council/COM

Data saturation around the role of Mid Council and COM specifically as a needed form of leadership support among PC(USA) pastors serving as IP and TP today.

Q24 Have you completed Transitional Ministry Training Week 2?
77 responses (44 people)

Yes 57%
No 43%

Q25 At which training site did you attend Week 2? (comp to Q9)
44 responses

TMWorkshops Menucha	64% (28 people)
Midwest Initiative MO	7%
Montreat NC	2%
Pittsburgh PA	2%

Others: IMN, Luther Seminary, Austin Seminary, etc. each 1% Q26

Q26 My Week 2 training took place: (of 43 responses)

	Week 2	Week 1 Q10
In Person	79%	87%
Online	21%	13%

Note: Q27, Q28, Q29, and Q30 asked only of those who indicated that they took Week 2 training at TMWorkshops | Menucha in Q25 28 people took Week here

Q27 Why did you choose to take Week 2 at this site? Choose as many as apply.

	Week 2 (59 responses)	Week 1, Q11 (84 responses)
Content	20%	20%
Faculty	24%	14%
Recommendation	12%	24%
Dates or time of year	20%	19%
Destination	20%	19%
Other - online	3%	

Q28 How satisfied were you with the content of Week 2?
26 responses
Comparison Week 1 Q12

	Week 1	Week 2
Extremely satisfied	41%	46%
Somewhat satisfied	38%	35%

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	8%	8%
Somewhat dissatisfied	14%	12%
Extremely unsatisfied	0%	0%

Q29 How likely are you to recommend Week 2 at this training site to others?
 Week 2, 26 responses
 Comparison Week 1 Q13

	Week 1	Week 2
Extremely likely	60%	58%
Somewhat likely	22%	23%
Neither likely/unlikely	8%	15%
Somewhat unlikely	11%	4%
Extremely unlikely	0%	0%

Q30 If you could change one thing about Week 2, what would it be and why? Long answer. See coding for Q30, Appendix E.

Q31 Were you serving as a transitional or interim pastor when you took Week 2?

Week 2 (45 responses)	Comparison Week 1 Q
56%	28%
45%	72%

Q32 Are you serving as a transitional or interim pastor today?
 Note: asked of those who took Week 2 training.

Yes	61%
No	39%

Q33 When seeking your next call, how likely are you to serve as a transitional pastor?
 Comparison to Q17 asked of those who took Week 1

	Week 1	Week
Extremely likely	37%	46%
Somewhat likely	33%	22%
Neither likely nor unlikely	11%	7%
Somewhat unlikely	11%	13%
Extremely unlikely	8%	13%

Q34 What draws you to serve as a transitional pastor? Choose as many as apply.
 Asked if Q13 a or b. 66 responses

	Week 1	Week 2
I enjoy guiding congregations in seasons of transition	42%	42%
I sense a call to lead change	32%	32%
My wages and compensation are adequate	5%	3%
I have a community of colleagues who support me in this work	10%	12%
Other	14%	10%

Other Week 2: I use creativity, learn new things, geographically limited in my search, good match for my temperament and skills, no long term commitment

Impressions: surprised that W1 and W2 responses appear to be very similar, as if I'm hearing the same voices - re creativity, learning new things, no long term commitment. Sort of disappointing actually. Had hoped for more nuance. Points to need/interest in doing interviews.

Q35 (see Q19) above for Week 1 and Week 2 comparisons

Codes and Notes on 85% of responses 'Other'

- At or nearing retirement
- Tired of moving, insecurity, low wages
- Poor health/medical issues
- Want to be more settled, tired of learning people's names and finding doctors, and having to leave and start over....
- Like serving where I am, and plan to stay [installed pastor]

Q36 (see Q 20) above for Week 1 and Week 2 comparisons

Q37 (see Q21) Is there a type of leadership support you wish for or have not found?
If yes, ask Q38

	Week 1	Week 2
Yes	28%	48%
No	72%	59%

Q38 (see Q22) What type of leadership support do you wish to find?

Q39 (see Q23) What most inhibits your access to this type of support?

Q40 Is there anything else you'd like to say?

APPENDIX H

Chart of Participants: PC(USA) Pastors

Current Role	Age at Ordination	How many times serving as a transitional pastor?	Week 1 Training Site: TMW = Transitional Ministry Workshops MALT = Synods of Mid-America & Lincoln Trails	Serving as a transitional pastor at time of Week 1?	How likely to serve as a transitional pastor in next call?	What draws you to serve as a transitional pastor? A: Enjoy guiding congregations in seasons of transition. B: Sense a call to lead change C: Wages and compensation are adequate. D: Have a community of colleagues who support me in this work.	Week 2 Training Site: TMW = Transitional Ministry Workshops MALT = Synods of Mid-America & Lincoln Trails
Interim Pastor	40s	3 - 9	Midwest Initiative MO	Yes	Extremely likely	A, B	Midwest Initiative MO
Interim Pastor	20s	2 +	Pittsburgh PA	No	Extremely likely	A	TMW Menucha OR
Transitional Pastor	20s	2 +	Midwest Initiative MO	No	Extremely likely	A, B	
Interim Pastor	40s	2 +	MALT St. Louis, MO	No	Extremely likely	A	TMW Menucha OR
Transitional Pastor	50s	2 +	Midwest Initiative MO	No	Extremely likely	A	Midwest Initiative MO
Transitional Pastor	20s	10 +	TMW Menucha OR	Yes	Extremely likely	A, B	
Interim Pastor	30s	10 +	Austin Seminary	Yes	Extremely likely	A, B	Austin Seminary
Not presently serving	20s		Zephyr Point NV	No	Extremely likely	A, B, D, There is no long term commitment.	TMW Menucha OR
Retired	40s		Zephyr Point NV	No	Extremely likely	A, B	TMW Menucha OR
Interim Pastor	40s		Austin Seminary	No	Extremely likely	A, B, C	TMW Menucha OR
Transitional Pastor	20s	2 +	TMW Menucha OR	Yes	Extremely likely	A, B	TMW Menucha OR
Transitional Pastor	40s	2 +	TMW Menucha OR	No	Extremely likely	A, C	
Interim Pastor	50s	2 +	TMW Menucha OR	No	Extremely likely	A, B	TMW Menucha OR
Serving in a Validated Ministry	30s		TMW Menucha OR	No	Extremely likely	Nearing retirement but wanting to continue to serve short term positions	TMW Menucha OR
Interim Pastor	30s	2 +	TMW Menucha OR	No	Extremely likely	At age 63 it is all that is available to me	TMW Menucha OR
Interim Pastor	40s	3 - 9	TMW Menucha OR	No	Extremely likely	A, B, C, D	TMW Menucha OR
Seeking a call	30s		TMW Menucha OR	No	Extremely likely	A, B, I am geographically limited in my search for my next position	TMW Menucha OR
Serving in a Validated Ministry	50s		TMW Menucha OR	Yes	Extremely likely	A, B, C	
Installed Pastor	30s		TMW Menucha OR	No	Extremely likely	God's Calling	
Retired	40s		TMW Menucha OR	Yes	Extremely likely	A, B, I enjoy digging and visiting to get to know a congregation quickly.	
Transitional Pastor	20s	3 - 9	Other	No	Somewhat likely	A; I also enjoy helping congregations work through conflict	Other
Transitional Pastor	20s	2 +	Zephyr Point NV	Yes	Somewhat likely	A, B	TMW Menucha OR
Interim Pastor	50s	2 +	Montreat NC	No	Somewhat likely	A	Montreat NC