

# The Developmental Tasks of Intentional Interim Ministry

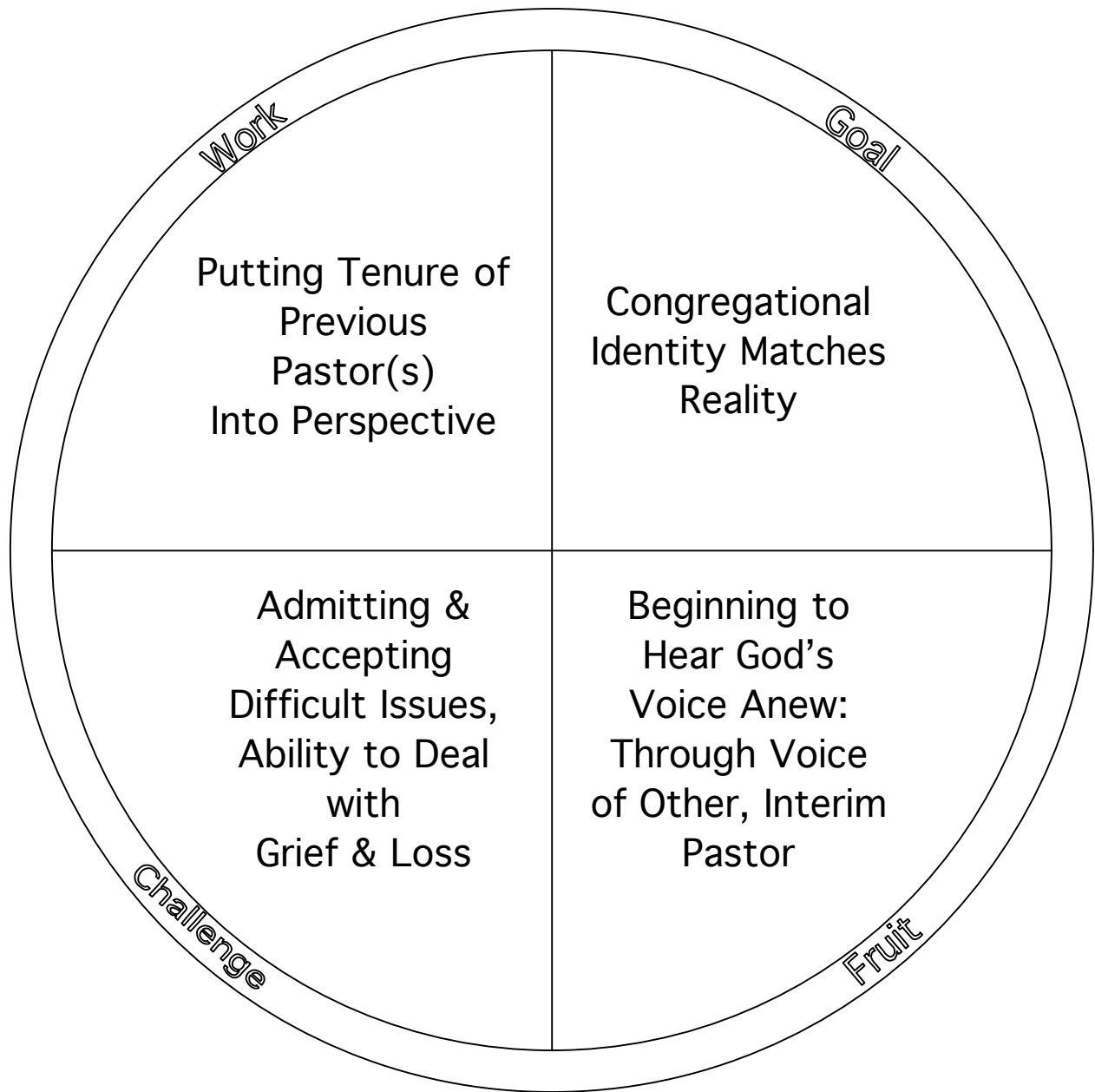


## A Theology of Transition

Interim ministry is about transition. Transition from one pastor to another is the reason for its practice, not for its existence. Transition is God breathed. Creation is endowed it—dusk before dawn, fallow before harvest, gestation before birth. God employs and blesses it—wilderness before Promised Land, judges before kings, John before Jesus. Those periods “in-between” are holy and sacred, gracious vessels of possibility and promise. Preparation and waiting are the handmaids of God’s providence. Transition, in the hands of its Creator, is the guardian and guide in our journey toward freedom, wholeness and hope.

“Behold, I am doing a new thing, now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” God’s intentions are proclaimed, yet our response is in question. Searching for, naming, and finding that ‘new thing’ is what ‘transitional’ ministry is all about. It is rooted in a deep awareness of the priority God has for times of preparation and waiting before God does something new. God doesn’t call people to “times of transition” (interim pastors and congregations) as much as God graciously ensures that we all experience the true nature of our calling—that in Christ we are indeed being made new. Our life, our hope, our future is in God’s hands and all things happen in God’s time, not ours. And God’s timing is perfect. (Rom 5:6)

# Come to Terms with History



Who Are We as a Congregation?  
How was God at Work When.../Where Are We Going?  
How Do We Discern God's Voice in the Wilderness?

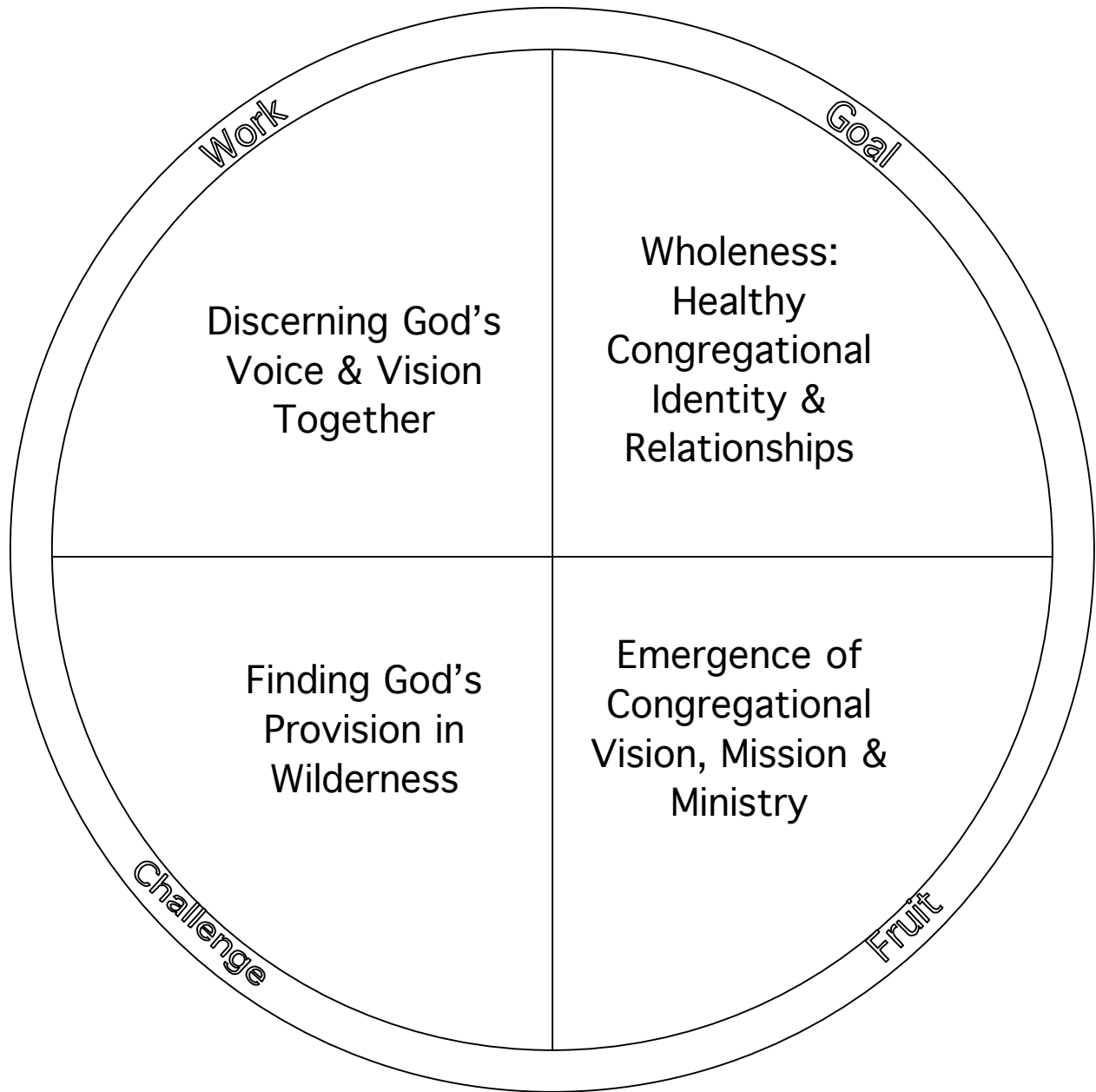
# Come To Terms With History

<p><b>WORK</b></p> <p>Putting Tenure of Previous Pastor(s) in Perspective*</p>	<p><b>GOAL</b></p> <p>Congregational Identity Matches Reality</p>
<p>The Role of the Intentional Interim Pastor is to Prepare the Congregation to Call an Installed Pastor*</p> <p>Pastoral change brings major emotional transition into life of congregation as they say goodbye to one pastor and prepare to say hello to another.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregations Mark Time by the Tenures of Their Pastors—<b>Ask Questions, Ignorance is Your Ally</b></li> <li>• Emotional System is Disrupted by Even an Amicable Parting of a Pastor—<b>Deal with It! (Emotional System)</b></li> </ul>	<p>Pastoral Change Naturally Brings Opportunity for Self-Reflection by Congregation</p> <p>Self-reflection includes more than just a look at the previous pastor(s) and their relationship with the congregation—it includes an assessment of the congregation’s place in community/society, history (21<sup>st</sup> Century), Christian Church, and respective Christian tradition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregations See Themselves (and the World) through Eyes of Their Previous Pastor(s)—<b>Ask What They See</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>CHALLENGE</b></p> <p>Admitting &amp; Accepting Difficult Issues/Ability to Deal with Grief &amp; Loss</p>	<p><b>FRUIT</b></p> <p>Beginning To Hear God’s Voice Anew: Through Voice of Others, Interim Pastor</p>
<p>Self-Reflection is Not a Welcomed Exercise For Most Congregations.</p> <p>There Will Be Hurt Feelings—Prepare for Resistance</p> <p>Congregations are emotional systems as much as they are missional bodies—they can and do “feel”. The departure of a pastor opens emotional processes within a congregation that must be addressed. In addition to the loss of a significant relationship, there is still the mystery of the unknown—where are we going, who will lead us—how an interim pastor deals with the congregation’s emotional responses to these issues (and more) makes all the difference.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What Do They Want/Not Want to Talk About?—<b>Use What They Want to Talk About to Talk About What They Don’t Want to Talk About</b></li> </ul>	<p>A Sure Sign of Health at this Early Stage of the Interim Journey is the Ability of a Congregation to Hear God’s Voice Anew</p> <p>Insights about the congregation’s past, its identity, and its future are given ultimately by God. Discerning God’s voice requires careful listening skills and is aided through the words and actions of those whom the congregation trusts. It is imperative that the interim pastor establish a level of trust with this interim congregation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Honor the History, Personality, Traditions, Customs of the Congregation—<b>But Be You (Self-Differentiate)</b></li> <li>• Do No Harm—<b>Don’t Touch Order of Worship for Three Months</b></li> </ul>

\* With more and more churches facing difficult questions about the viability of their future as a church, the task of Coming To Terms with History may include the tough question of whether they can support the call of a pastor or should consider dissolution. In this case, the work of Putting the Tenure of the Previous Pastor in Perspective is modified to include Putting the Tenure of the Congregation’s Ministry in Perspective—the goal however remains the same, bringing the congregation’s identity into greater congruence with reality. If you determine that you are in or will be in such a setting, it may be helpful to think of your role within the congregation not as an interim who is preparing the church for their next called pastor, but more as a consultant whose job is to frame difficult issues in manner that will allow the congregation to wrestle with them and come to some resolution. (These transitional roles were termed Temporary or Stated Supply under previous Books of Order.)

Mead, *A Change of Pastors...and How it Affects Change in the Congregation*, pp. 1-43 (Alban, 2005)  
 Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook of Interim Ministry*, pp. ix-25, 65-74 (Alban, 1998)  
 Gripe, *The Interim Pastor’s Manual* (revised), pp. 1-50 (Geneva Press, 1997)  
 White, *Saying Goodbye: A Time For Growth for Congregations and Pastors* (Alban, 1990)

## Discover New Identity



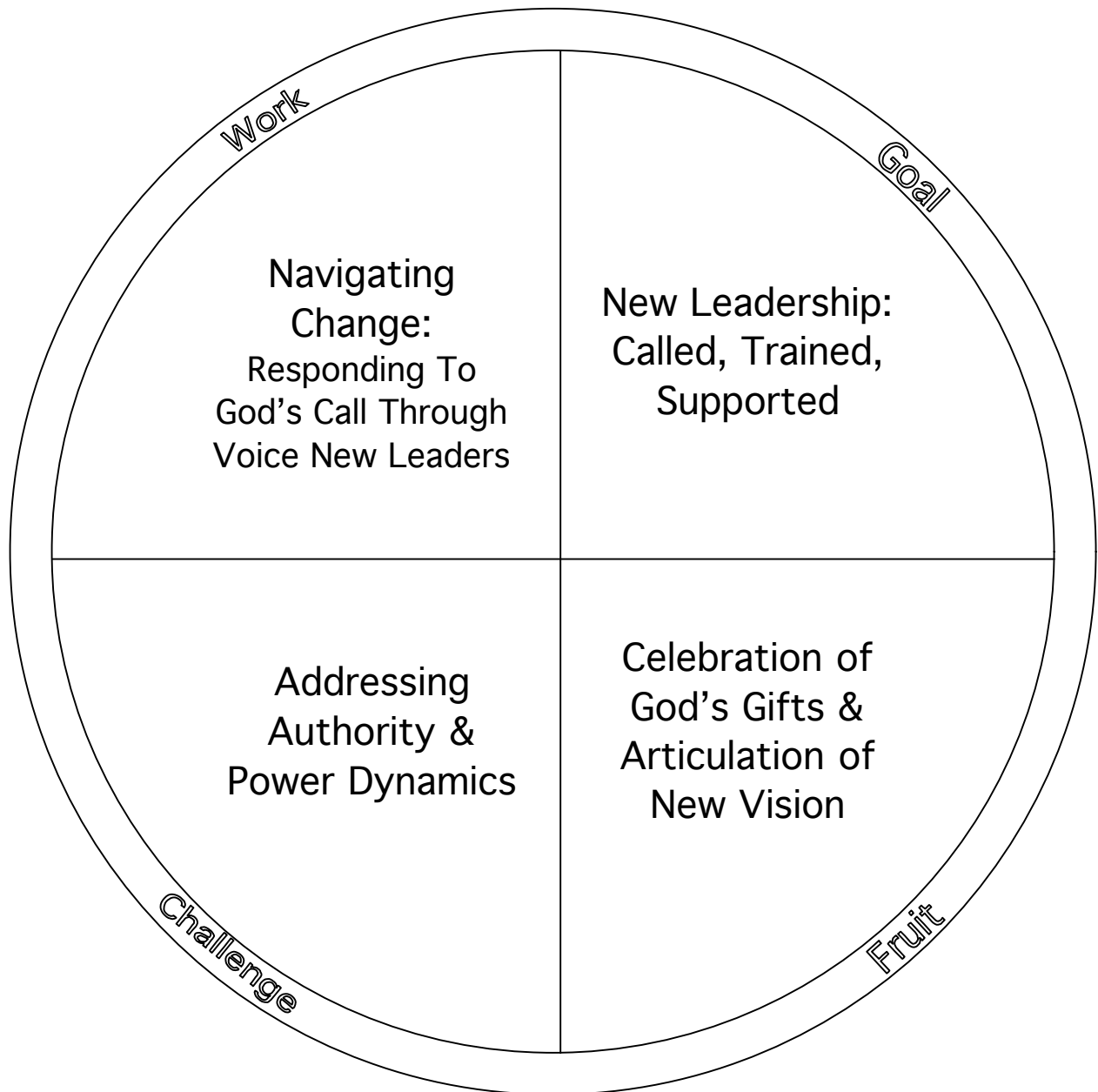
Who Are We? (Identity)  
What Are We Called to Do? (Purpose)  
Who is Our Neighbor? (Mission)

# Discover New Identity

<p><b>WORK</b></p> <p>Discerning God's Voice &amp; Vision <i>Together</i></p>	<p><b>GOAL</b></p> <p>Wholeness: Healthy Congregational Identity &amp; Relationships</p>
<p>The Past is Put in Perspective as the Congregation Begins to Respond to God's Voice. Hope is Fostered as They Talk About Where God Might Be Leading</p> <p>Honest self-assessment is a valuable part of congregational growth and renewal. Pastoral change brings a unique opportunity for a reappraisal of congregation's ministry—this begins however with an awareness of God's presence even in the absence of the familiar.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the Congregation's Strengths?—<b>Allow Them to "Boast in the Lord" (What Are You Not Hearing?)</b></li> <li>• What are Areas for Growth?—<b>Strengths May Reveal Weaknesses</b></li> </ul>	<p>A Body (Congregation) Suffers When One or More Parts are Unhealthy. A Healthy Body is Able to Listen and Respond More Faithfully to the Movement of God's Spirit</p> <p>The role of the interim pastor is not to "heal" the congregation but to address imbalances and to bring unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, and perspectives to the awareness of the whole body. This will cause pain and discomfort—the payoff however is when growth and renewal are achieved in the life of faith (spiritual maturity).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Parts are Related to the Whole—<b>Analyze the Parts, Deal with the Whole</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>CHALLENGE</b></p> <p>Finding God's Provision in the Wilderness</p>	<p><b>FRUIT</b></p> <p>Emergence of Congregational Vision, Mission &amp; Ministry</p>
<p>Confidence is Gained when Progress is Made Along the Interim Journey. Manna, Tangible Signs of God's Sustenance and Grace, is an Essential Part of the Wilderness Experience.</p> <p>God's care and direction for the interim congregation is often seen in the little things along the interim path—a balanced budget, reconciled relationships, answered prayer are all reminders of God's presence in uncertain times. Like Moses, the interim pastor should not hesitate to pray for, talk about, and celebrate these small 'miracles' of when they appear.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bible is Full of Stories of God's Providence and Care—<b>Pray It! Preach It! Teach It!</b></li> <li>• Going Back to Egypt Can Be Tempting—<b>Know Their Egypt, Believe Their Promise</b></li> <li>• Egypt is Not an Option—<b>Rest Don't Resist, Listen Don't Fight</b></li> </ul>	<p>Listening Leads to Reflecting on What Has Been Heard. Reflection Becomes Vision When Consensus Is Shared</p> <p>Self-assessment is going on all the time in congregations. The difference between informal evaluation of a congregation's identity and honest self-assessment of the whole of a congregation's life and ministry is the level to which that process is open, purposeful, and transparent. The interim pastor who promotes and leads an open, inclusive, structured and well-communicated self-study greatly increases the chances that the time spent discerning God's voice and direction will bear fruit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discernment is a Subjective Art—<b>Focus on Process Not Answers</b></li> </ul>

Mead, *A Change of Pastors...and How it Affects Change in the Congregation*, pp. 45-60 (Alban, 2005)  
 Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook of Interim Ministry*, pp. 75-86 (Alban, 1998)  
 Gripe, *The Interim Pastor's Manual* (revised), pp. 42-44 (Geneva Press, 1997)  
 Rendle and Mann, *Holy Conversations* (Alban, 2003)  
 Oswald & Friedrich, Jr., *Discerning Your Congregation's Future*, (Alban, 1996)

## Transition to New Leadership



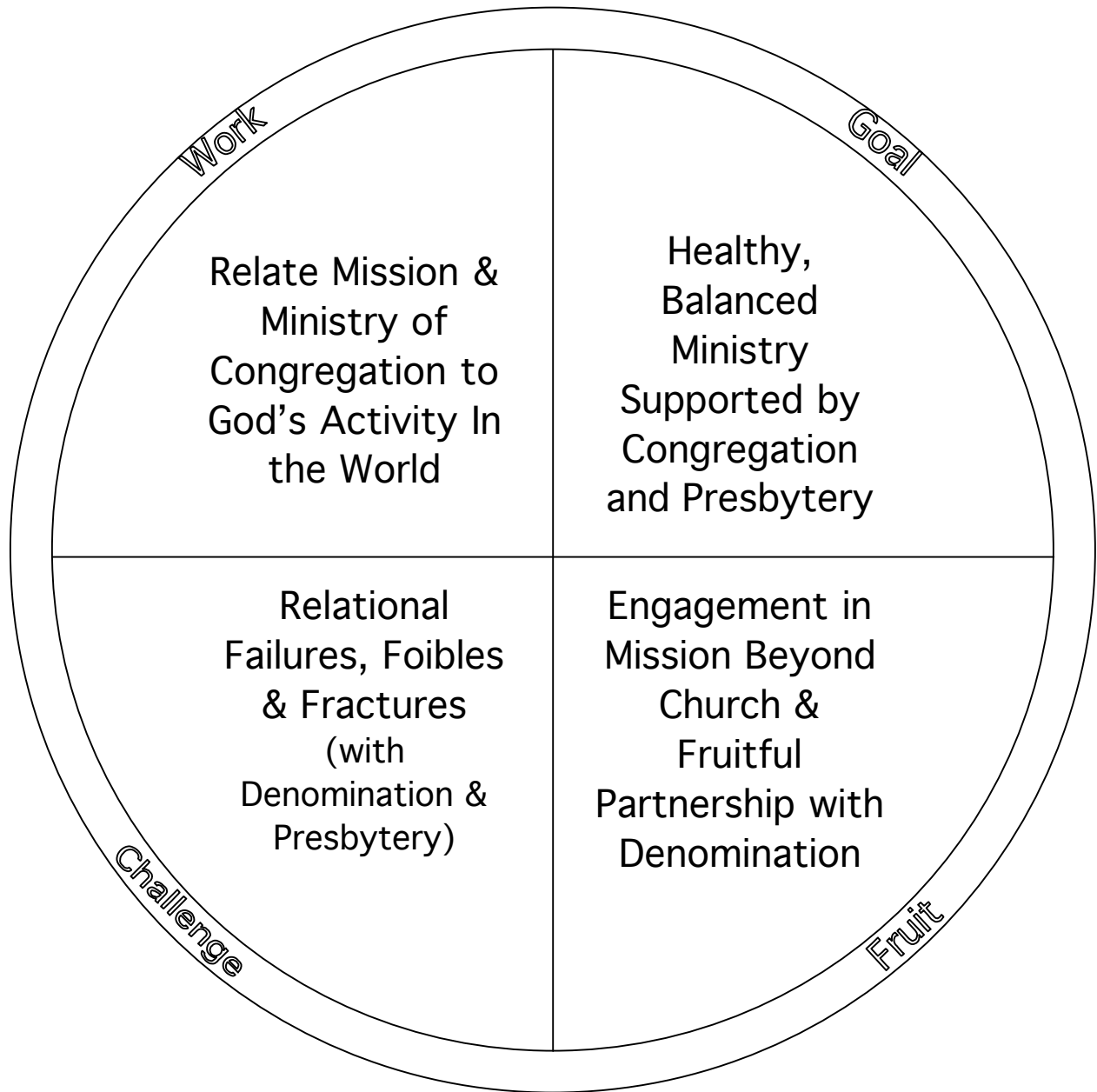
What Are Our Gifts (What Are Our Areas for Growth?)  
What is Our Vision for Ministry?  
Who Is God Calling to Lead Us?

## Transition to New Leadership

<p><b>WORK</b></p> <p><b>Navigating Change: Responding to God’s Call Through Voice of New Leaders</b></p>	<p><b>GOAL</b></p> <p><b>New Leadership: Called, Trained, Supported</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Vision is Tested When New Leaders Are Given Roles of Responsibility and Authority</p> <p>Most church polity mandates changes of leadership. Shifts in leadership are often approached with forethought and care. Whether it’s calling new elders or deacons or creating a mission study task force—its essential that the people who are called to serve share a common vision and perspective. They need not always agree (low level conflict is healthy) but they should work in harmony with each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The True Test of a New Leader is Not Whether They Agree With the Pastor (Interim, Other), But Whether They Share the Vision—<b>The Vision is the Criterion, (Over)Communicate the Vision in the Discernment/Calling of New Leaders</b></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Gifts For Leadership Need to Be Honed. Prepare Leaders for Their Role</p> <p>Leadership (elder, deacon, other) training is a neglected practice in the church. In many interim settings it has been years since the church had any training program for its leaders. An intentional interim minister always gives leaders the training they need to fulfill their calling. A sign of health is the degree to which the church supports the whole enterprise of calling, training and supporting its new leadership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great Leaders are Born to Be Taught—<b>Get in Touch with Your Inner Teacher (or Find Someone Who Is)</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>CHALLENGE</b></p> <p><b>Addressing Authority &amp; Power Dynamics</b></p>	<p><b>FRUIT</b></p> <p><b>Celebration of God’s Gifts &amp; Articulation of New Vision</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Shifts In Leadership Bring Power Dynamics to Fore. Engage the Powers, Empower the Leaders</p> <p>The emergence and activity of new leaders will undoubtedly trigger reactions. Formal and informal power structures are always present in congregations. A skilled interim will use shifts in leadership to address issues of power and authority: are reputational leaders still calling all the shots, are new leaders merely mimicking old ways of “getting things done”, or are healthy decision making processes honored and followed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low Level Conflict is a Sign of Progress—<b>Celebrate Resolution</b></li> <li>• Conflict is Part of Change—<b>Run to It, Not Away From it.</b></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">God Bestows the Gifts to Fulfill the Vision</p> <p>The interim congregation will need “short-term” successes in order to remain engaged in the interim journey. (Kotter) Times of celebration marking significant achievements, milestones during the interim time are essential for the moral of the congregation. They also serve as reminders of God’s grace and provision. Sermons, talks, conversations about the gifts of the body of Christ grounds the emerging vision/identity of the congregation in the activity of God in their midst.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making Connections is Key—<b>Be an Interpreter/Communicator of Connections</b></li> <li>• Celebrate the Sacraments—<b>Get in Touch with Your Inner Priest</b></li> <li>• Celebrate Potlucks—<b>Get in Touch with Your Inner MC</b></li> </ul>

Mead, *A Change of Pastors...and How it Affects Change in the Congregation*, pp. 44-60 (Alban, 2005)  
 Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook of Interim Ministry*, pp. 87-98 (Alban, 1998)  
 Gripe, *The Interim Pastor’s Manual* (revised), pp. 44-46 (Geneva Press, 1997)  
 Friedman, *Generation to Generation* (Gilford Press, 1985)  
 Steinke, *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach* (Alban, 1996)  
 Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* (Alban, 2006)

# Renew Relationships with Mission Partners (Presbytery & Denomination)



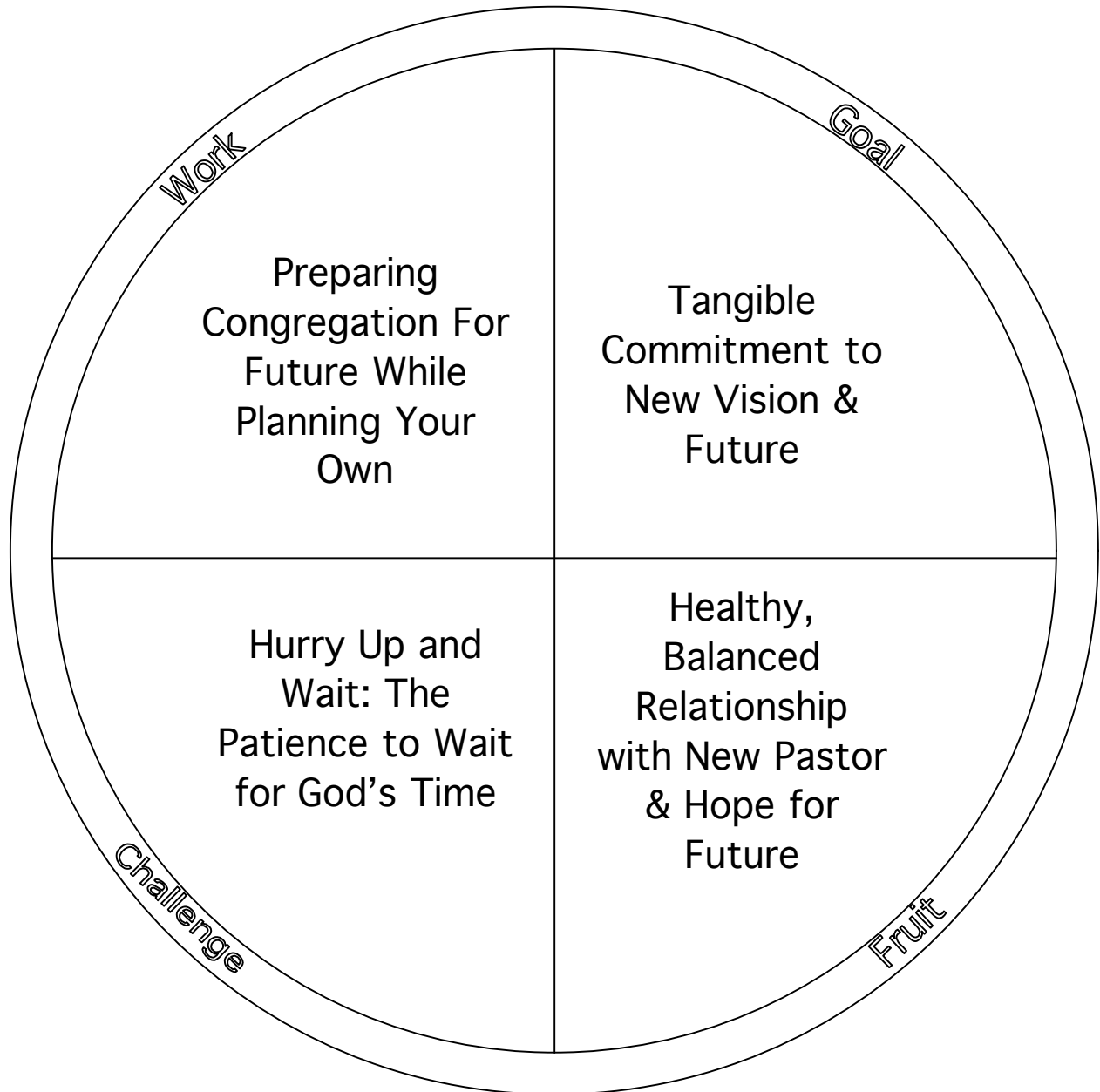
What is Our Mission?  
How Do We Support Our Mission (Stewardship)?  
What Does it Mean to Be Presbyterian?

## Renew Relationship with Mission Partners (Presbytery & Denomination)

<p><b>WORK</b></p> <p>Relate Mission &amp; Ministry of Congregation to God's Activity in the World</p>	<p><b>GOAL</b></p> <p>Healthy Balanced Ministry Supported by Congregation and Presbytery</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Who is My Neighbor?</p> <p>Church consultants say there are three questions every congregation must ask itself: Who are We? What Are We Called to Do? Who Is Our Neighbor? (See <i>Discovering A New Identity</i>). The last part of an honest self-assessment is discerning how to relate (minister to/with) the congregation's neighbors. Making connections between the inward work of self-assessment with outward work of mission brings a new (to many, welcomed) dimension to the interim journey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Great Commission is Not Optional, Its Foundational—<b>Don't Wait Until the End to Talk About It.</b></li> <li>• There Are 40 Languages Spoken in a Small Suburb of Seattle—<b>How Many of Those Languages Are Known by Your Congregation?</b></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Balancing the Inward &amp; Outward Dimensions of Ministry</p> <p>Most churches will not need to be convinced of the need for outreach or mission. However many will need to be convinced of the need to <i>evaluate</i> its missional commitments. Whose needs are being met by the congregation's mission activity? When was the last time the congregation heard about the Christian movement in other parts of the world? Is the congregation's missional perspective from the 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century? Is missional commitment seen in dollars or hands?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Era of Christendom is Over—<b>Speak the Truth in Love</b></li> <li>• The World Just Moved in Next Door—<b>Have You Met Them?</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>CHALLENGE</b></p> <p>Denominational Failures, Foibles &amp; Fractures (Local &amp; National)</p>	<p><b>FRUIT</b></p> <p>Engagement in Ministry Beyond the Church &amp; Fruitful Relationship with Presbytery</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Like It Or Not, The Presbytery (Denomination) is a Mission Partner</p> <p>They say you can't choose your neighbors. That's true with denominational relationships as well. Navigating the attitudes of the congregation toward the denomination and presbytery is a key job of the interim pastor. Past hurts loom large and must be dealt with in order for the congregation to fully support its ministry. Why? Because accountability and partnership are biblical ideas. Most interim pastors know that the church must not only come to terms with itself and its own history, but must also come to terms with its relationship with the larger church—it's best to deal with this early, rather than during the mission study/PNC phase of the journey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions Are Reality—<b>Know the Difference Between Sacred Cows and Paper Lions</b></li> <li>• Perceptions Are Reality—<b>Educate, Educate, Educate</b></li> <li>• Independence, Co-Dependence, or Accountability—<b>What Does the Bible Say?</b></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mission Fruitfulness</p> <p>A balance between the inward organization or program of the church and active engagement with the world on behalf of God makes for a healthy church. A mutually beneficial, working relationship with the presbytery (or governing body) is also a sign of wholeness. When these two aspects of the church's life are functioning well the potential for congregational vitality and involvement is high. It also increases the likelihood that the next chapter of the church's life will be fruitful. A future pastoral relationship can build more easily on this solid foundation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission is at the Very Heart of Church Life—<b>Immerse Yourself in the Mission of the Church (Local, Universal &amp; Historical)</b></li> </ul>

Mead, *A Change of Pastors...and How it Affects Change in the Congregation*, pp. 61-93 (Alban, 2005)  
 Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook of Interim Ministry*, pp. 99-107 (Alban, 1998)  
 Gripe, *The Interim Pastor's Manual* (revised), pp. 46-48 (Geneva Press, 1997)  
 Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Eerdmans, 1998)  
 Mead, *The Once and Future Church* (Alban)

## Commit to New Future & New Leadership



How Can We Be Faithful While We Wait?  
How Can We Strengthen Our Gifts?  
What Areas Can We Grow to Be More Faithful?

# Commit To New Future & New Leadership

<p><b>WORK</b></p> <p>Preparing Congregation for Future While Planning Your Own</p>	<p><b>GOAL</b></p> <p>Tangible Commitment to New Vision &amp; Future</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">New Normalcy &amp; Upheaval</p> <p>Perhaps the most difficult part of the interim journey for the interim pastor is the end. Right when things are beginning to take shape for the congregation and the promise of new pastoral leadership is on the horizon, the interim pastor's life is anything but certain. The congregation is becoming accustomed to a new normalcy in its life, and the interim pastor is facing weeks if not months of emotional, spiritual, vocational upheaval. Even so, built into the interim pastor's hello is a goodbye and now time to model a healthy exit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Good Goodbye Can Heal a Multitude of Bad Goodbyes (Perhaps Even the Most Recent Goodbye)—<b>Say Goodbye Regularly &amp; Often</b></li> <li>• The Beatles Interim Hit!—"You Say Goodbye, They Say Hello"</li> <li>• All Goodbyes Are Not Alike—<b>Honor Significant Relationships With Time &amp; Closure</b></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">New Identity &amp; Vision Taking Root</p> <p>The true test of an interim's work is whether or not the new vision and identity has taken root in the life of the congregation. Only time will tell, but if there was integrity and openness in the process of vision formation and the congregation has truly come to terms with its history (in other words, the interim pastor addressed the emotion system), the congregation (and the interim pastor) should see some visible signs of new life. Healthier relationships among members and partners in mission, stronger commitment to the overall ministry of the church, vitality in worship and fellowship, and hope for the future are all tangible expressions of a fruitful interim time and a good transition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faith Without Works is Dead—<b>Exercise Your Faith</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>CHALLENGE</b></p> <p>Hurry Up &amp; Wait: The Patience to Wait For God's Time</p>	<p><b>FRUIT</b></p> <p>Healthy, Balanced Relationship with New Pastor &amp; Hope for Future</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Patience, Patience, Patience (&amp; Perseverance)</p> <p>The PNC is formed and searching and a new dimension is given to the interim journey—expectant waiting. The journey up to this point can be exhilarating but at times can also be exhausting (hopefully in the good sense). Waiting patiently for God's time after such a concentrated time of preparation can seem counter productive. The burden to wait is borne by all but is felt most acutely by the PNC. The congregation that finds ways to support the PNC through the offering of prayer, space and encouragement gives the PNC the confidence and time it needs to evaluate the resumes of potential pastors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronos vs. Kairos—<b>Preach, Teach, and Live the Difference</b></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Admiring the Fruit</p> <p>The overall health of the congregation is a goal of the interim journey. It is measured by the strength and vitality of the relationships the congregation forms with each other and its partners in mission. The rubber meets the road however in the relationship it will establish with its new pastor. The interim pastor will not however be present to navigate this part of the journey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well Done Good and Faithful Servant—<b>Rest and Admire the Fruit</b></li> </ul>

Mead, *A Change of Pastors...and How it Affects Change in the Congregation*, pp. 61-93 (Alban, 2005)

Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook of Interim Ministry*, pp. 108-117 (Alban, 1998)

Gripe, *The Interim Pastor's Manual* (revised), pp. 48-50 (Geneva Press, 1997)

Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Eerdmans, 1998)

Mead, *The Once and Future Church* (Alban)

White, *Saying Goodbye: A Time For Growth for Congregations and Pastors* (Alban, 1990)