



Occasionally, someone asks, “How many interims have you served?” I’ve reflected back over the last half century of ministry to find an answer. As a Baptist and a doctoral student in seminary, I served three part-time interims in New Orleans, one of which included some of my seminary professors. I once got a doctoral seminar assignment at the entrance after worship, after my professor complimented me on the sermon.

Then, upon returning to the seminary on tenured faculty, I served four more interims part time.

As an Episcopalian, I took training with the interdenominational Interim Ministry Network as part of the discernment about where I would serve as an Episcopalian. Other than serving as associate rector at St. James Episcopal in Marietta and serving as church start-up priest in Richmond, VA for eight years, my Episcopal journey has been largely interim ministry. Serving Christ Church has been my ninth interim. So, that makes a grand total of sixteen interims, if my math is accurate.

What have I learned? That would require at least a booklet. But, in this space, I can say that interim ministry is in large part about redeveloping a congregation. The majority of churches I have served were either plateaued or in decline and some were coming out of serious conflict. The myth that a parish can’t grow during an interim is just that, a myth. Interim clergy can work to renew parish structures, involve and train new leadership, and refresh the ministry with newcomers. Newcomers do not join primarily because of a clergy person; rather, they join in large part because of the community.

My approach has been to make a quick on-the-ground assessment about the primary challenges and invest quickly in those areas. That always has involved self-study initiatives like Holy Conversations and Holy Cow survey.

Next week—part two—the tasks of the interim period and how that has developed at Christ Church.

God’s peace,

David W. Perkins+
Interim Rector