

RATIONALE FOR THE INTERIM PASTOR NOT BEING A CANDIDATE

The question is often raised by a congregation or a call committee, "Why is it considered unethical and improper practice for a congregation to consider calling a person who is serving in the position of an interim pastor as the new pastor for that congregation?" From the experience of Synod and those persons who have worked closely with the call process, it is deemed inadvisable to consider the interim pastor. Following is the rationale for this position:

1. An interim pastor has an advantage over other possible candidates who would be considered for the position because he has more visibility to the congregation. This makes it unfair to others who would be considered but not have the same visibility.
2. An interim pastor will always have a following but will also almost always have those who are not favorably committed to him. If he were to be called to be the pastor, there would be built-in opposition from the very beginning.
3. If the decision is made to consider the interim pastor along with the others being considered and the interim pastor does not get the position, there could be hurt feelings that would jeopardize the remainder of his interim work until the pastor is called.
4. If the interim pastor is considered, there are already people lined up for and against the interim pastor. Whichever way the decision goes, there will be some of the congregation upset.
5. The congregation itself may pass up better leadership than it is getting, even with a good interim pastor, if it fails to consider a larger number of potential pastoral candidates.
6. Interim ministry is unique, and an interim pastor may often lead in ways that would be acceptable as an interim pastor but would not be acceptable to some in the congregation were he to remain as the regular pastor.
7. Other pastors know of the ministerial ethics involved and will know that those have been broken if an interim pastor is called. The result could be a lack of fellowship and broken relationships with other pastors.
8. A precedent could be set which would result in pastors seeking interim positions with the specific idea in their minds of putting themselves in a better position to be considered and called as the pastor, thus greatly damaging the whole call process.
9. During the time of the interim, the congregation often is vulnerable and therefore develops a relationship based on their need and insecurity. While this can be useful in leading a congregation to prepare for the incoming pastor, it could make for an inappropriately skewed decision for a permanent call.

(Note: Pts. 1-5 & 9 should also be considered when thinking of an assistant or associate being called to be senior or administrative pastor of the congregation.)

