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**EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS**

**Interim Priest's and Congregation's Mutual Covenant of Ministry**

This Covenant of Ministry model contains recommended provisions that may be varied according to the particular facts and circumstances. For a part-time Interim Priest, the various sections should be prorated on the basis of a fraction (or percentage), e.g., half-time, three-quarters time, etc. Consult the current Diocesan Guidelines for Compensation and Benefits.

**Interim Priest's and Congregation's Mutual Covenant of Ministry**

**BETWEEN**

The Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ and the Vestry of \_\_\_\_\_ Church, \_\_\_\_\_, Massachusetts, which has accepted [his/her] appointment by the Bishop to serve as the Interim Priest with the understanding that [he/she] will serve beginning \_\_\_\_\_ and expect to terminate upon the arrival of the new Rector or at a mutually agreed upon date with 30 days' written notice given by either the Vestry or the Interim Priest, or at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop and not requiring a 30-day notice. The parties agree that any changes in the terms and conditions of this agreement must first be approved by the Bishop.

The relationship between an Interim Priest and a Vestry is unique, and it evolves within a larger covenant of mutual trust and ministry to each other. The purpose of this Covenant is to strengthen that relationship by clarifying some of the practical arrangements and to reduce later misunderstandings.

**Section A – COMPENSATION**

1. The Interim Priest's salary will be \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per annum commencing on or about \_\_\_\_\_. It will be renewed annually.

The parties agree that the Interim Priest's Total Clergy Compensation ("TCC") will equal \$ \_\_\_\_\_ [including the amount of the Housing Allowance, if applicable] which corresponds to \_\_\_\_\_% of full-time based on current Diocesan Guidelines for Compensation and Benefits.<sup>1</sup>

2. Housing <sup>2</sup>

**[Option A – Interim Priest will not live in a Rectory]**

The Vestry agrees to adopt annually the necessary resolution required by the Internal Revenue Service designating that portion of the TCC shown above as a Housing Allowance within the meaning of Section 1.107 of the IRS Code. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Specify other compensation received by the Interim Priest that may be considered part of TCC. Consult the current Diocesan Guidelines for Compensation and Benefits.

<sup>2</sup> The model contains two options relative to housing. "Option A" applies to those situations where the Interim Priest will not live in a Rectory. "Option B" applies to those situations where the Interim Priest will live in a church-provided Rectory.

The Interim Priest and [his/her] family will be living in the church-owned Rectory. The Vestry will be responsible for the following expenses:

- (a) Insurance (and property taxes, if any) on the property.
- (b) Maintenance or replacement of some appliances:[Specify, such appliances, etc.];
- (c) Maintenance of the structure(s), renovations or capital improvements;
- (d) [Specify other responsibilities, e.g., snow and leaf removal, etc.].

The Interim Priest and [his/her] family are responsible for good stewardship in regard to the care of the Rectory and will remain responsible for the general care and upkeep such as [specify particular responsibilities].<sup>4</sup>

The Interim Priest is expected to present an annual report to the Vestry on the condition of the Rectory, with particular attention to items requiring maintenance.

The Vestry agrees to adopt annually the necessary resolution required by the Internal Revenue Service designating that portion of the TCC shown above as a Housing Allowance within the meaning of Section 1.107 of the IRS Code.

3. [Optional] Other Compensation: [Specify, e.g., SECA allowance, equity allowance, 403(b) contribution, etc.].<sup>5</sup>

### **Section B – PREMIUMS**

1. The Vestry will pay the following premiums as required:

- (a) Pension premiums as required by the Church Pension Group based on the Interim Priest's TCC;
- (b) The cost of Health Insurance premiums [specify whether individual or family coverage, which includes domestic partners, where applicable] according to the percentage prescribed by diocesan policy.

2. The Vestry will provide the following additional benefits [specify other benefits, e.g., dental, other insurance, life insurance for clergy not eligible for pension, etc. and allocation of premiums].

### **Section C – EXPENSES**

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<sup>3</sup> The amount of the TCC designated as a Housing Allowance should be the lesser of (1) the fair rental value for the housing: including furnishings and appurtenances (such as garage) and utilities or (2) the amount the Interim Priest expects to spend on housing.

<sup>4</sup> The specific responsibilities of the Vestry and Interim Priest will depend on the particular facts and circumstances. Once these are determined, they should be delineated with as much specificity as possible.

<sup>5</sup> Since the Interim Priest while living in a church-provided Rectory will not build any equity in a home, a number of Vestries have agreed to fund an equity allowance through contributions to a tax sheltered 403(b) plan. Such other compensation is includable as TCC.

The Vestry agrees to pay for the following expenses incurred by the Interim Priest in fulfilling [his/her] professional duties:

- 1) Travel: The Vestry agrees to reimburse the Interim Priest for travel expenses at the current rate established by the IRS.
- 2) Communications: To provide for a computer/laptop/pad, internet connection, and a telephone in the Interim Priest's office and a cell phone if necessary. All postage for church business will be included in the parish budget.
- 3) Office: All necessary office furniture, equipment and supplies will be paid by the parish, the amount to be established in the annual budget.
- 4) Discretionary Fund: A fund will be provided for charities and expenditures at the discretion of the Interim Priest in accordance with the Diocesan Guidelines for Clergy Discretionary Funds, the amount to be established in the annual budget.
- 5) Guests and Hospitality: The Interim Priest will be reimbursed for the reasonable costs of hospitality and entertainment on behalf of the parish, the amount to be established in the annual budget.
- 6) Professional Fees: Dues of the Interim Priest to the Massachusetts Episcopal Clergy Association and other professional associations, the cost of the annual Clergy Conference with the bishops, and the cost of professional periodicals, the amount to be established in the annual budget.
- 7) Continuing Education: The amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ annually to support continuing education with the expectation that there be a report to the Vestry and/or parish on his/her continuing education work.
- 8) The Vestry agrees to pay the cost of pulpit supply and pastoral services when the Interim Priest is absent from the parish; the amount to be established in the annual budget.

#### **Section D - LEAVE TIME**

[Currently, four (4) weeks of vacation per year and one (1) week of continuing education/career development per year are the recommended minimum. Additional time off for clergy retreat is strongly encouraged.]

For employment periods longer than eight (8) months but less than one year, the normal vacation leave for clergy of four (4) weeks per year (including Sundays) may be prorated].

1. \_\_\_\_\_ weeks of vacation per 6 months, including Sundays
2. \_\_\_\_\_ weeks per year (in addition to vacation time) for continuing education and career development [and \_\_\_\_\_ days per year (in addition to the above) for time of retreat].

Family and sick-leave are administered as set forth in diocesan guidelines.

#### **Section E - SUPPLEMENTARY COMPENSATION**

The disposition of wedding, funeral and other church-related fees will be determined in conjunction with the Vestry and can be used to fund the Discretionary Fund.

The following understanding has been reached between the Interim Priest and the Vestry concerning the income the Interim Priest may receive performing [specify].

**Section F - USE OF BUILDINGS**

The Vestry shall make the decision for use of the church and buildings by outside individuals or groups in consultation with the Interim Priest.

## **Section G – MUTUAL MINISTRY AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Recognizing that the review of a congregation's total ministry should be a continuing process, the Interim Priest, Wardens and Vestry agree to meet monthly (regular vestry meeting) to clarify expectations and to evaluate successes and raise concerns from the congregation, staff, leadership, or the Interim Priest in order to ensure the effectiveness of their joint ministry.

### **Developmental Tasks of the Interim Period**

The interim period is seen as prime time for renewal, re-energizing the parish in its life and mission. Beyond maintaining effective ministry during this period, the Vestry and the Interim Priest shall work together to prepare for healthy transition to the next rectorship.

Specific tasks to be addressed include:

- 1) Coming to terms with the history of the congregation and its relationships with previous clergy.
- 2) Discovering the congregation's special identity, what it dreams of being and doing apart from previous clergy leadership.
- 3) Dealing with shifts in leadership roles that naturally evolve in times of transition, allowing new leaders to come to the fore constructively.
- 4) Renewing and reworking relationships with the Diocese, so that each may be a more effective resource and support to the other.
- 5) Building commitment to the leadership of the new rector in order to be prepared to move into the future with openness to new possibilities.

### **Vestry Responsibilities**

All ministries other than those reserved to ordained leadership (such as administering the sacraments) are understood as mutual ministries of the laity of the parish and the Interim Priest. The Vestry shall lead the laity to support and cooperate with the Interim Priest in pursuit of parish goals and in the performance of the developmental tasks of the interim period.

The Vestry is legal agent for the parish in all matters concerning its corporate property and in its relationship with the Interim Priest. The Vestry will see that the Interim Priest is properly supported, personally and organizationally, as well as in the Vestry's financial obligations to the Interim Priest.

### **Interim Priest's Responsibilities**

The Interim Priest represents and extends the ministry which is the Bishop's pastoral and canonical responsibility for congregations in leadership transition. The Interim Priest shall lead the parish as pastor, priest and teacher, sharing in the councils of this congregation and of the whole church, in communion with our Bishop.

The Interim Priest is a priest trained to assist parishes during a time of transition, especially during the period between the leave-taking of one rector and the calling of another rector. It is an intentional ministry of sustaining the direction and ministry of a congregation as defined by the vestry; reviewing the past, assessing

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the present, and evaluating the future. However, it is expected that the ministry during the interim period will be different from that experienced by members of the parish under the previous rector.

The major goal of the Interim Priest's ministry is to prepare the congregation for the next phase of their life together.

To this end, the Interim Priest shall:

- help the congregation deal with a sense of loss and any unresolved issues arising from the departure of previous clergy,
- deal with internal conflicts and help heal any divisions within the congregation.
- help the Vestry, lay leaders and staff make such changes as may be needed to align parish life and administration with generally accepted standards in the Diocese.

The primary tasks of the Interim Priest shall be to:

- work with the Vestry and other lay leaders to maintain the regular schedule of worship services and preaching, education, pastoral care and pastoral offices (weddings, funerals, baptisms),
- calling upon the sick and shut-in, visiting newcomers, and ongoing administration of the parish,
- supervise all parish staff in the exercise of their responsibilities and ministries, for which they shall be accountable to the Interim Priest,
- support the Vestry in its responsibilities.

The Interim Priest is expected and encouraged to participate in regional, diocesan and churchwide responsibilities as well as community endeavors. Further, time given to such work shall be understood as an integral part of the Interim Priest's ministry in the parish.

Monthly attendance at meetings of the Interims Priests and Rector Search Consultants by Interim Priest is expected by the Bishop.

**The Interim Priest shall not be eligible to be a candidate for Rector.**

## **Section H – STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

In accordance with diocesan and Episcopal Church principles, this congregation will not discriminate on grounds of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, or disability.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Since its 2001 Report to Convention, the Compensation and Benefits Committee has included this option to reflect the concerns of both the Diocese of Massachusetts and Episcopal Church as reflected in a variety of resolutions presented in their respective conventions

**Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts-Interim Covenant of Ministry**

[http://www.diomass.org/inside/parish\\_clergy\\_support/document\\_library](http://www.diomass.org/inside/parish_clergy_support/document_library)

**PARISH SIGNATURES**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Interim Priest: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by the Vestry on (date) \_\_\_\_\_

Warden: \_\_\_\_\_

Warden: \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reviewed by the Office of Transition Ministry**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

**BISHOP'S SIGNATURE**

Reviewed by the Bishop:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Bishop: \_\_\_\_\_