

## CONSIDERING A TRANSITIONAL PASTOR

In recent years many churches have faced increased expectations and pressures. Christian Reformed churches have also reflected a growing diversity of style and culture. In turn many churches have experienced challenging and sometimes painful transitions.

In response the Pastor Church Resources office has sought to help. A new category of pastors has been developed- called Specialized Transitional Pastors. These are experienced pastors who receive specialized training to help churches handle complicated and delicate transitions. They usually serve a church for 12-20 months.

Churches seek out a Specialized Transitional Minister for three main reasons:

- 1 a church is grieving a major loss- a pastor or key leader or a cherished identity and needs healing before moving on to the next chapter of life and ministry

- 2 a church is facing a serious conflict

- 3 a church is facing a major adjustment of its direction or style.

A transitional pastor is somewhat different from an interim pastor. Often an interim pastor is retired, serves on a part-time basis, and generally covers basic ministries to sustain a church between pastors: such as preaching; hospital visiting and attending council meetings. In contrast, a transitional pastor usually is not retired, generally serves full-time, and has specialized training to help address deeper dynamics, long-term issues, major transitions, and fresh vision moving forward.

The need for strategic transitional ministry was recognized back in the 1980's. The Pastor Church Resources office of the Christian Reformed Church began supporting one or two transitional pastors to help in difficult church circumstances. Over the years the need and desire for transitional pastors has steadily grown. Today there are nearly twenty transitional pastors who have been officially endorsed- with the experience, gifts and training needed. About a dozen are Americans; a half dozen are Canadians.

Transitional pastors can help in three main ways. First, they take on the usual senior pastor responsibilities: worship leadership/preaching, pastoral care, and general leadership- that addresses a churches transitional needs and goals. Second, they serve as an objective consultant: to better understand a church's past; appreciate the present, and plan for future. Third, they serve serve as an adviser in the search process for a new senior pastor.