

The Importance of the Interim Period Between Pastors

By

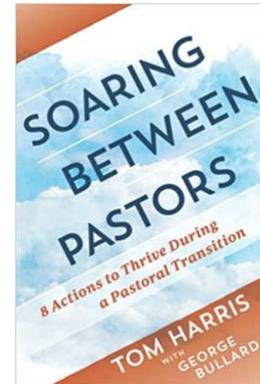
George Bullard

Executive Director

Columbia Metro Baptist Association

GeorgeBullard@ColumbiaMetro.org

Two experiences early in my ministry impressed me about the importance of the interim period between pastors. These experiences continue to impact me today and have resulted in my helping a ministry colleague, Tom Harris of Interim Pastor Ministries, write a book on ***Soaring Between Pastors: 8 Actions to Thrive During a Pastoral Transition***. See this book [HERE](#).



The first was my experience on the staff of the Baptist association in Charlotte, N.C. The catalyst for that experience was Lawrence Childs, who was the director for whom I worked. He would have our entire associational staff come alongside congregations during their time without a pastor to help them engage in a planning process that looked at their next season of ministry. The idea was for them to call a pastor based on where they discerned God was leading them next. This was as opposed to simply calling a new pastor as quickly as possible because they were anxious without the direction provided by a pastor.

It often worked for the benefit of the congregation and the advancement of the Kingdom of God. It was a thing of beauty to see. It became one of the hallmarks of that association. The long-term relationship Lawrence Childs had with congregational lay leadership and the proactive vision of the association to help as many congregations as possible reach their full Kingdom potential made this possible. I loved participating in this process during my years on this staff.

The second experience was more personal. This was when my father served as an interim pastor during his retirement years. Twice over a six-year period he served as an intentional interim pastor – before such roles were widely known – for congregations in crisis. Each congregation was facing possible dissolution. He agreed to serve as their interim pastor for up to three years if they would give him some limited authority to make various transitions and changes in their congregation without having to seek the approval of the congregation.

Both congregations are thriving 40 years after their interim experience with G.W. Bullard. They gave permission for transitions and changes they could not understand at the time, but today those who were present during those days likely celebrate the spiritual and strategic actions of that era. One of the congregations reverted to mission status, came under the sponsorship of other congregations and their association, and then emerged out of the three years of interim ministry with renewed vitality and vibrancy.

In the Midlands of our state, Johnny Rumbough, director of the Lexington Baptist Association for the past quarter of a century, has modeled proactive and position interim ministry. He has done so by personally serving as the interim pastor for multiple congregations in his association and leading them through a revitalization process during his tenure with them. He is the catalyst for building a movement of revitalization among the congregations-in-association called Lexington Baptist Association.

Let's celebrate the potential of interim periods and help congregations soar between pastors. In CMBA, David Waganer, a One Priority Mobilizer, leads our interim pastoral ministry. You may contact David at waganerd@gmail.com or 803.931.6302.