

# When Your Preacher Leaves: Interim Services for Churches between Ministers

Newsletter, October, 2006, #5

Thank you for your response to this Interim Ministry Newsletter. We hope you find a “mustard seed” that will be helpful in your ministry.

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## On How to Hire Preachers

Let's face it – we violate all the rules. We keep on making the same old mistakes in the same old ways. When will we ever learn? Recently a nationally known sectarian preacher retired. We can/must learn from others. We, basically, use the right terms and do OK in the small specifics. However, we violate the cardinal principles. Our religious neighbors although failing in jargon and small specifics honor the cardinal principles:

- (1) They take their time. They allow 6 months to 18 months. We “go bananas” in 6 weeks! We GOTTA have a preacher. They designate an “interim” preacher. Church work continues...sometimes increase. We “shut down” when the preacher quits. Members need to know they are members...ministers...responsible. This is a cardinal principle. Churches must not/cannot be built upon preachers. We must learn to serve with or without them. “Haste makes waste.” We need to learn to take our time.
- (2) They seek a man who fills their needs. This demands homework. They need to evaluate themselves. Where they are and where they wish to go. They don't entertain application, resumes. They are not interested in “your favorite preacher” or “brother-in-law.” We have a parade of preachers, hiring the one that hits our fancy. We have a “star” complex...get out and hire “the star of tomorrow.” This is a catastrophe city. We don't know who we are, where we are, nor where we are going. Then we expect miracles from our new “star.” Another great principle is to hire the man who can serve our real needs.
- (3) They involve the entire membership. The pulpit committee seeks out the man who can do their best job. This is a long process. Then – only then – is a man invited in to preach. The man and his family come to visit. Many various receptions are held. Then the congregation invites him or rejects him. But it is the “whole church.” We allow the elders, a small group, or a segment to hire/fire ours. There is a great wisdom on the principle of allowing the whole church to be involved.

We need to learn from others (Charles Hodge, *From the Banks of Onion Creek*, Vol. 7, No. 34, January 4, 1989, used by permission).

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Quotations from Literature Useful For Church Leaders, John Parker

1.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

HAMLET 1.5

A useful quotation to describe how limited our thinking can be.

2.

The time is out of joint.

HAMLET 1.5.

Description of a period of time when people are misbehaving.

3.

Brevity is the soul of wit.

HAMLET 2.2

A line to encourage speakers and writers to be concise.

4.

. . . there is a kind of confession in your looks which your modesties have not crat enough to color.

HAMLET 2.2

A line to use to people (such as children) whose facial expressions and body language reveal that they are concealing something.

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## Smile of the Month

Sometimes the court itself came in for something less than reverential treatment. One man upon hearing his sentence accused the court of everything from stupidity to perfidy. He was fined ten dollars for contempt and paid his fine with a twenty-dollar bill. When he was told the court couldn't make change he said, "Never mind the other ten dollars, I'll take it out in contempt" (*The Humorous Mr. Lincoln*, by Keith W. Jennison, page 28).

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## *Mustard Seeds* from Favorite Books, Jerrie Barber

One of the few books I have read five times is *The University of Hard Knocks*, by Ralph Parlette. I look forward to the next reading. We have recently finished it again in our weekly staff meetings at Berry's Chapel. The book can be bought new or downloaded free from several sites on the internet. Here are some of my favorite "mustard seeds" from *The University of Hard Knocks, The School that Completes our Education*:

The other day I watched a blind man go down the aisle of the car to get off the train. Did you ever study the walk of a blind man? He “pussyfooted” it along so carefully. He bumped his hand against a seat. Then he did what every blind man does, he lifted his hand higher and didn’t bump any more seats.

I looked down my nose. “Ralph Parlette,” I said to myself, “when are you going to learn to see as well as that blind man? He learns his lesson with one bump, and you have to go bumping into the same things day after day and wonder why you have so much ‘bad luck!’” (pages 18,19).

Let me repeat, things that go downward will run themselves. Things that go upward have to be pushed. Going upward is overcoming (page 19).

We think if we could only get into a great place we would be great. But unless we have grown as great as the place, we would be a great joke, for we would rattle. And when we have grown as great as the place, that sized place will generally come seeking us.

We do not become great by getting into a great place, any more than a boy becomes a man by getting into his father’s boots. He is in great boots, but he rattles. He must grow greater feet before he gets greater boots. But he must get the feet before he gets the boots (page 44).

We can be a pumpkin in one summer, with the accent on the “punk.” We can be a mushroom in a day, with the accent on the “mush.” But we cannot become an oak that way (page 45).

Do you note that people grow more in lean years than in fat years? Crop failures and business stringencies are not calamities, but blessings in disguise. People go to the devil with full pockets; they turn to God when hunger hits them. “Is not this Babylon that I have builded?” says the Nebuchadnezzar of material prosperity as he drinks to his gods. Then must come the Needful and Needless Knocks handwriting upon the wall to save him.

You have to shoot many men’s eyes out before they can see. You have to crack their heads before they can think, knock them down before they can stand, break their hearts before they can sing, and bankrupt them before they can be rich (page 118).

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## Barber Clippings

Since the last newsletter I spoke at a Senior Rally (for old folks) at the West 7<sup>th</sup> congregation in Columbia and held a meeting at the New Hope church in Guin, Alabama. It was good to have Chad and Shelly Hedgepath home for a few days. They held a fund raising dinner and collected more than \$96,000.00. They are ahead of schedule in starting the children’s home. If you would like to know more about this good work, look at this site:

<http://www.missionlazarus.org/laspalmashome.html>. Our transition continues well. Gail and I are visiting families at Berry’s Chapel.

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Please see my revised website at [www.interimcofc.com](http://www.interimcofc.com). At present I am delivering my PowerPoint series on great English hymns at the Granny White church on the second through last Wednesday nights at 6:30 p.m. in the chapel. I visited sites associated with these hymns this past summer.

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