

# WHEN YOUR PREACHER LEAVES: Interim Services for Churches Between Ministers

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Jerrie Barber and John Parker



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## Threats of Suicide: Three Questions by Jerrie Barber

What do you do when you are talking with a person, face to face or on the phone, and he (or she) indicates or hints that he is going to commit suicide?



Years ago, Jimmy Kennedy from Piedmont, Alabama, gave a suggestion in a workshop that has been very valuable to me. He told us three questions to ask. If you get the answers to all three, you need to do an intervention. Often a person is only considering that as an option to stress in his life. However, if a person answers all three questions with definite answers, he is probably seriously thinking of killing himself.

The three questions:

1. “Why are you thinking of killing yourself?” This gives the person permission to tell you their problems, frustrations. It usually takes a long time to listen to the answer to this question.

2. “How would you kill yourself?” Do they plan to use a gun? Do they have one? Is it close by? Have they already loaded it? Do they plan to overdose? Is the medicine available?
3. “When do you plan to do it?” I have found that most people have not determined the time. They are only considering it. One time I had a man tell me that he was going to shoot himself and that he would do it as soon as he finished the call with me. I had the secretary call the police to go to his home.

When I have talked with a person about their thoughts of suicide, I get a “suicide contract.” I ask them to promise me that if they think about killing themselves, they will call me and talk with me about it before they do it. I discuss the details. “That means if I am flying you will have to wait until I land and we will talk about it. If I am not home or in the office, my wife or secretary will tell you how to get in touch with me and we will talk.” I go over the details and communicate that I am serious about the promise. When they leave that discussion, I remind them of the agreement we have.

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## Thoughts for Those Who Lead in Public Prayer

by John Parker

The person who leads in prayer in a public worship service provides an important service and is to be commended. He also recognizes that he has the weighty responsibility of representing not only himself but others before the Lord. He therefore will therefore feel keenly his responsibility and do his best in determining what to pray and in expressing himself. The church needs more men who will serve by leading in worship, and all who will should be encouraged and helped. These thoughts may be of assistance to those who lead in prayer.



### **Preparation**

Prayers can be prepared for, just as readings of the scripture or sermons are. While spontaneity is desirable, there is also a call for preparation. Indeed those that are planned are likely to be the more effective. In preparing to lead in prayer, consider the following steps.

1. Ask God to guide and assist you in this public service.
2. The major portions of prayers are praise, thanksgiving, and petitions. Plan what you will say in each of these parts of your prayer. List those blessings for which you will give thanks and petitions that you will make. Be specific. List the names of people for whom you will pray or works on which you will ask God’s blessing. Consult with those in the congregation who know of people or efforts which need prayers. You may discreetly use these written references while leading the prayer.

## Leading the prayer

1. Remember that you are representing the entire assembly before God and not only yourself. Generally, therefore, it will be more appropriate to use “we,” speaking in the plural for all present, rather than “I.”
2. Speak loudly enough for all to hear and speak slowly and distinctly. Since your words are representing the prayers of those whom you are leading, they should hear you clearly to be a part of the prayer. The best way to be heard is to use the public address system. Speak clearly and directly into the microphone. When you lead the prayer from where you are in the auditorium, it is best to stand, turn so that you will be facing the largest portion of the audience, and speak with your head high enough that your words will be directed outward.
3. Do not use the prayer as an occasion to preach or to say things which are actually directed to the audience rather than to God.
4. Speak with expression, but without too much emotional display.
5. If the prayer is for a special purpose, strive to accomplish it. For example, the original purpose of the prayer for the emblems in the Lord’s Supper is to give thanks for the bread and the fruit of the vine. If you are leading this prayer, remember to specifically express that thanks.
6. In expressing that the prayer is offered through the name of Christ (Jn. 14:13), state this accurately. It is inaccurate to say “In your name we pray” when addressing the Father, since the prayer is offered in the name of Christ, the Son (John 14:13; 1 Timothy 1:5).
7. Express everything that needs to be said in the prayer, but do not continue it too long. Public prayers differ from private ones in that the audience cannot concentrate on the words of a prayer leader as long as they might on their own thoughts in their private prayers.
8. Please be aware that the congregation deeply appreciates your effort to lead them in prayer. Thank you for this service.

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## Shakespeare Quotations for Ministers, by John Parker

I’ll follow this good man, and go with you;  
And, having sworn truth, ever will be true.  
[A bride’s promise to her beloved just before her wedding]  
TWELFTH NIGHT 4.3



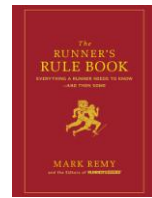
Be that thou know'st thou art, and then thou art  
As great as that thou fear'st.  
TWELFTH NIGHT 5.1

Why, all the souls that were were forfeit once,  
And He that might the vantage best have took  
Found out the remedy. How would you be,  
If He, which is the top of judgment, should  
But judge you as you are? O, think on that,  
And mercy then will breathe within your lips  
Like man new made.  
TWELFTH NIGHT 2.2

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Mustard Seeds from Favorite Books, Jerrie Barber

*The Runner's Rule Book*, by Mark Remy, © 2009 by Rodale Inc.



RULE 1.1  
HAVE FUN

You thought I was kidding when I called this the first rule of running? No way. I'm serious about having fun.

And before you smirk and flip the page, please take this first rule to heart. It is primary and vital, and without it, no other rule in this book is worth beans. No other fact is so fundamental to running or so very easy to forget: *Done properly, running is fun* (page 2).

RULE 1.2  
EXPAND YOUR  
DEFINITION OF FUN

This is a corollary to Rule 1.1. As a runner, your definition of fun – which previously might have included such activities as visiting water parks, watching screwball comedies on DVD, and scrapbooking – must be...well, let's call it broadened.

For runners, fun might include:

- Waking up at 5:30 a.m. to run 10 miles.
- Running in blistering heat.
- Running in the rain.
- Running on 400-meter circles.
- Feeling as if your lungs are about to explode.
- Paying a race director good money for the privilege of turning your own toes black and blue.
- Any combination of the above (page 3).

RULE 1.3  
BE PATIENT

Impatience is the runner's single biggest bugbear. This is true for just about every aspect of running. Whether you're talking about training (trying to do too much too soon), racing (going out too fast), shoes (buying the first pair you see), or even nutrition (opting for a Pop-Tart over a bowl of steel-cut oats), expediency almost always leads to the poorer choice. So take a deep breath. Consider your options. Make smart choices.

Patience pays off (page 4).

RULE 1.4  
BLACK TONAILS  
ARE A BADGE OF HONOR

Run long enough and you'll wind up ruining a toenail or two. It's a cost of doing business as a runner.

Whether it's because your shoes are too big or too small or because you've just finished a run or race with lots of toe-punishing downhills or simply because the toenail gods happen to be in a foul mood, someday you will peel off your socks and see black where before there was pink.

Congratulations! These bruised (and possibly bloody) nails are tiny trophies, conferred upon you for roughing it out. They are black-and-blue badges of honor (page 5).

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## Smile of the Month

I was heading for work on the freeway one morning when I noticed a car weaving slightly in the next lane. As I pulled even with it, I could see that the driver's face was almost touching the windshield as she used the rearview mirror to apply mascara.



Suddenly the car veered in my direction. It scared me so badly I dropped my lipstick right into my cup of coffee – Catherine Lemm (*Reader's Digest*, March 1999, page 31).

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## Barber Clippings

We are about to finish this interim. The elders at Hendersonville announced Sunday, November 29, that Kelly Campbell and his family will be coming to be the next pulpit minister. Kelly has lived and ministered in Cookeville for twenty years. Both Hendersonville and Kelly are excited about their work together. I will be here through the 29<sup>th</sup> of December.

Gail and I have enjoyed our time in Hendersonville. I started preaching here the first Sunday in January of this year. The elders, staff, and congregation have been encouraging and cooperative in the process. It has been a joy to work with them in the transition.

We are now ready to go to another congregation. It is our desire to live in the community and do interim ministry. I will preach, teach classes, do training, and serve as a consultant to the elders and any committees they desire to facilitate the transition process.

If you have an interest in knowing more about how I might be helpful to you or someone you know, please contact me in any of the ways below:

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John Parker

Jill and I complete our interim at the Fairview, Tennessee, congregation on December 20. Brad Tate will begin his work there the following week. We thank the elders of this fine church for the opportunity to work with them and are confident of a great future for their work for the Lord. As in the past, we have made many new friends there that we treasure.

I am therefore available for interim service: please see [www.interimcofc.com](http://www.interimcofc.com).

We are receiving orders for my book *Abide With Me: a Photographic Journey Through Great British Hymns* for the Christmas season. Please see the advertisement in the last three issues of the *Christian Chronicle* as well as [www.abidewithmehymns.com](http://www.abidewithmehymns.com).

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