

WHEN YOUR PREACHER LEAVES: Interim Services for Churches Between Ministers

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Jerrie Barber and John Parker



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Choices for Replacing the “Old” Preacher by Jerrie Barber

Have you noticed that often when a preacher has stayed a long time and has done a good work that the next preacher (or preachers) stays only a short time?



Often we look on the church and preachers as mechanical devices. When my alternator is defective on my car, I want it fixed – quickly! The mechanic installs a new one and it is running again.

Many Christians think that when a preacher resigns or is released, we need to get a new one as quickly as possible – get it “fixed.” If some could have their wishes, we would have the “good-bye” potluck for the old preacher this Sunday. We would have already “tried out” and selected the new preacher. We could have his “welcome” potluck next Sunday.

A friend told me of one congregation where they did the “good-bye” and “hello” dinner the same day. That has some merit. You save one potluck with that arrangement.

When I was teaching at the Nashville School of Preaching, one of the students told me about an experience he had. The church “tried out” several preachers. They narrowed the choices to two men. They brought those two back on the same Sunday, had a potluck, and announced the “winner.” My student was the “loser.” He said it was a very awkward day for him.

Where there is not some in-between time after a lengthy ministry (five years or more), often the next preacher becomes an “unintentional interim.” I have served in both capacities – intentional and unintentional minister. I can assure you the intentional is more pleasant.

An intentional interim minister can be helpful during the time of transition. He comes with the understanding – he signs a contract – that he will not consider or be considered as the next full-time preacher. His mission is to help the church grieve the loss of the previous preacher, evaluate her spiritual state, determine the desirable qualities for the next preacher, and find him.

Shakespeare Quotations for Ministers, by John Parker

Hereafter, in a better world than this,
I shall desire more love and knowledge of you.
AS YOU LIKE IT 1.2

Let me the knowledge of my fault bear with me.
AS YOU LIKE IT 1.3

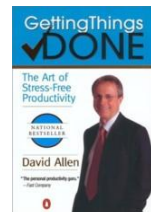
Never so much as in a thought unborn
Did I offend your Highness.
AS YOU LIKE IT 1.3

Treason is not inherited.
AS YOU LIKE IT 1.3

Mustard Seeds from Favorite Books, Jerrie Barber

Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity, by David Allen,
Copyright © David Allen, 2001.

Focusing on values does *not* simplify your life. It gives meaning and direction – and a lot more complexity (page 9).



Focusing on primary outcomes and values *is* a critical exercise, certainly. But it does not mean there is less to do, or fewer challenges in getting the work done. Quite the

contrary: it just ups the ante in the game, which still must be played day to day. For a human-resources executive, for example, deciding to deal with quality-of-work-life issues in order to attract and keep key talent does *not* make things simpler (page 9).

Your ability to generate power is directly proportional to your ability to relax (page 10).

The knowledge that we consider knowledge proves itself in action. What we now mean by knowledge is information in action, information focused on results – Peter F. Drucker (page 24).

Implementing standard tools for capturing ideas and input will become more and more critical as your life and work become more sophisticated, as you proceed in your career, for instance, you'll probably notice that your best ideas about work will not come to you *at* work. The ability to leverage that thinking with good collection devices that are always at hand is the key to increased productivity (page 30).

If you're waiting to have a good idea before you have any ideas, you won't have many ideas (page 80).

Smile of the Month

“Before you criticize someone you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when you criticize them, you're a mile away and you have their shoes” – Donald Nichols, *The Complete Runner's Day by Day Log and Calendar 2003*.



Barber Clippings

We began our third interim with the Collegese church of Christ in Cookeville, Tennessee yesterday, March 14. Gail and I are enjoying getting to know the brethren here and have been encouraged by their welcome.

This has been my longest time of “unemployment” in my life – two months. I sent out 723 emails since January 3. I contacted everyone in my Outlook Contacts file that I thought would be interested. I found that 20% were incorrect email addresses. 10% of the people replied, either by email or phone call. Thank you to everyone who has been helpful. Some expressed words of encouragement. Some forwarded my email to others. Some sent contact information for possible interim opportunities.

The *Career Transition Ministry* of the Hendersonville church of Christ was helpful. Brad Towe and Jan Blackwell are providing information and support to those unemployed or underemployed. They meet the first and third Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. in the Adult Education Center of the Hendersonville building.

Our contact information for Cookeville: [Contact Me](#) .

Gail and I are thankful to the elders and members of Collegieside for inviting us to be a part of this congregation for the next six to eighteen months (or until they find a preacher – whichever comes first. We hope to encourage and be encouraged.

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John Parker

Jill and I will be joined by Ray and Marilyn Walker and by Lipscomb's Amy Hamar for a Lipscomb sponsored tour June 14-25 of the sites in England where the great hymns were composed. We will visit sites featured in my book with international photographer Paul Seawright *Abide With Me: A Photographic Journey Through Great British Hymns* (see www.abidewithmehymns.com to order). For info on the trip, see <http://alumni.lipscomb.edu/alumnitravel> and www.squidoo.com/abidewithmehymnstour.



I spoke on the topic “Shall the Weaker Brother Perish” (1 Corinthians 8 and 10) at the Freed-Hardeman lectures last month.

I am writing the introductory chapter of the next issue of *Think* magazine on the topic of heroes.

I continue to plan with Mike Fernandez, Lipscomb's director of theater, and videographer Russ Sturgeon for filming a series of films on *Romeo and Juliet* and other Shakespeare plays for Christian high school students. We hope to complete the set by fall for distribution online. Please alert Christian high schools in your area about this series and/or contact me at johnparker22@comcast.net for information.

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