



Transitional Ministry Report to the Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly March 2026

Transitional Ministers are called by the Southeast Michigan Synod Council to be transition specialists in congregations with pastoral vacancies. Transitional Ministers are placed in congregations in a cooperative discernment process with the congregational council, synod staff, and Conference Dean. We are leaning more into the term “transitional ministry,” than “interim ministry,” as transition indicates multiple journeys congregations can take in transition, from calling a new pastor, to entering into a partnership with another congregation, to discerning the process of holy closure.

Transitional Ministers serve as the synod’s boots on the ground and subject experts, acting as resources and guides for congregations in transition:

Some questions lifted up in the transition process are the following:

1. Identify congregational strengths and values: what assets will empower forward movement in mission?
2. Focus on mission and purpose: why is this community of faith here?
3. Build discipleship: what spiritual practices help deepen faith and inspire action?
4. Connect with the community: what are local needs and how can the church help meet them?

Our roster of Transitional ministers meets bi-monthly, normally the third Wednesday, at 2pm, either on zoom or at the Synod office. Meetings include devotions (rotated leadership), sharing updates, highs and lows, networking, and learning from one another.

As of this writing, active intentional Transitional Ministers in our synod include:

Pastor Kristin VanderPloeg, serving Lord of Life, Brighton
Pastor Sean Myers, serving St. Paul, Dearborn
Pastor Candida Turner, serving St. Peter’s, St. Clair
Pastor Krister Ulmanis, serving Hope, Farmington Hills
Pastor Bill Kirsh-Carr, serving Christ, Monroe
Pastor Joshua Rinas, serving Immanuel, Ypsilanti
Pastor Rebecca Pryzbylski, serving St. Luke’s, Temperance
Pastor Jackie Rau, serving Zion, Petersburg
Pastor Julie Winklepleck, serving Emmanuel, Southfield
Pastor Diane Sponheim, serving All Saints, Hartland

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Jen Kiefer