



## The Discernment/Application Process for Specialized Transitional Ministry

Welcome to the discernment/application process for Specialized Transitional Ministry (STM).

Thrive supports a cadre of Specialized Transitional Ministers (STMs) who assist congregations in times of significant transition. They are particularly helpful to congregations that are experiencing unique challenges after a time of conflict, a long pastorate, or some sort of trauma. Their primary goal is to ready congregations for whatever is next for them—often relationships with their next pastors.

Thrive is responsible for the process of endorsing STMs. However, congregations seeking the services of STMs are responsible for contacting potential STM's and the subsequent process of contracting with them.

Endorsed STMs are ordained ministers of the word who have demonstrated, over at least ten years in congregational leadership, significant competencies in the basic tasks of parish ministry such as preaching, pastoral care and administration. Whether serving a congregation full time, as the "in place" pastor during their STM placement, or as part time transitional leaders and coaches, they are pastors who have demonstrated unique gifts for this work. They have undergone a [Birkman Assessment](#) to gauge their "fit" for the work, and they have received special training through the [Interim Ministry Network](#).

The process of becoming an STM is a discernment process more than just an application process. That process is laid out in this discernment/application document. On the following pages you will find a step-by-step description of that process in the form of a checklist of items that you will need to attend to. You will also find the application form itself. After completing the application form please email it to [thrive@crcna.org](mailto:thrive@crcna.org) or send it to:

Thrive – STM Program  
300 East Beltline Ave. NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

If you have any questions please connect with Rev. Dave Den Haan (1-877-279-9994 ext. 2712) or Rev. Sean Baker (1-877-279-2678 ext. 2678), ministry consultants with Thrive.

**Your Discernment/Application Checklist for Endorsement  
as a Specialized Transitional Minister in the CRCNA**  
**Please read this material carefully before completing the application form!**

**Stage One: Preliminary Steps**

- 1. Complete the attached Discernment/Application Form for Specialized Transitional Ministry Endorsement (see below). Thrive staff will guide you through the process once they have received this form. Please note that in the application form we ask for three written references, as described below, and we will contact two additional church leaders such as a council chairperson and the Regional Pastor to gain their observations of your ministry capacities and functioning. Upon receiving this form Thrive will also conduct a background check on you.
- 2. Complete the Birkman Assessment (a scientifically developed, multi-dimensional assessment, which provides personality and occupational data to help understand individuals' unique behavior and work satisfaction across different situations and industries). The Birkman Assessment is paid for by Thrive. To make arrangements for the assessment please contact Margie Brenner at [mbrenner@crcna.org](mailto:mbrenner@crcna.org).
- 3. Meet with Thrive staff to discern the advisability of moving forward in the endorsement process. If it is advisable to move forward then you will be given three discernment questions to take with you into the prescribed STM training, provided by the [Interim Ministry Network](#):
  1. During the training what topics left you feeling energized? What topics left you feeling some dread?
  2. In what ways will you need to adjust and adapt to do this work? What will that cost you personally and emotionally?
  3. How would you regulate yourself when faced with individuals and situations that “push your buttons”?

**Stage 2: Initial Training**

- 4. Complete Level One of the Interim Ministry Network’s training for transitional ministry leaders, called “FTL Essentials”. This level is organized as three sequential modules, taken over 2-4 weeks, and provided virtually at several times during the year. Participation in a free orientation session is required for entry. For information about how to register for the orientation session and the training please go to the Interim Ministry Network’s website at: <https://imnedu.org/fundamentals-of-transitional-leadership/>
- 5. Participate in an interview with Thrive staff and two current STMs to obtain Thrive permission to continue with the process. If you sustain this interview then you will be ready for an initial transitional ministry assignment. You will be assigned a mentor after this placement has been identified.

### Stage 3: Provisional Endorsement

- 6. Begin your initial transitional ministry placement, coached by a mentor who will meet with you monthly. Ordinarily, this placement shall be at least one year in length, and the trainee will be expected to attend the annual STM conference.
- 7. After a year of work as a transitional ministry leader participate in a discernment conversation with Thrive staff and mentor. This conversation will determine whether or not the STM-trainee will move on towards a full Thrive credential. Thrive staff will have obtained input from the mentor and the council of the ministry placement in preparation for this conversation. After the conversation the trainee will be informed as to next steps: Complete initial transitional ministry placement and undergo further training towards a full credential OR complete current placement without being granted permission to progress towards a full STM credential. Further training may include 2-3 additional modules in the IMN training program, a program of training provided by Thrive staff and STMs, additional readings and/or course work, or a combination of any of these elements.
- 8. A full STM credential will be granted upon:
  - a. Successful completion of the initial placement.
  - b. Successful completion of any additional training requirements.
  - c. The acceptance of a call to the STM role (per Church Order article 12b). This call would be issued by the council of the church that will serve as the STM's calling church, at the request of the STM-trainee, and will hold the STM's new ministry credential and participate in joint supervision of the STM.
- 9. Plan and implement an installation/commissioning service at the STM's calling church.

**Full endorsement is a privilege awarded to you upon successful completion of these steps. It is revocable for cause at the discretion of Thrive.**

**Discernment/Application Form  
for Endorsement as a Specialized Transitional Ministry in the CRCNA**

Name:

Date:

(Last, first, middle)

Address:

City

Province/State

Postal/Zip Code

Phone:

Office

Home

Cell

Email:

Present church you serve and position you hold:

How long have you served there?

Previous churches you have served or ministry positions held (identify length of tenure at each):

College/University:

Degree received & year:

Seminary:

Degree received & year:

Graduate Work:

Degree received & year:

Ordination Date:

Please identify all continuing education programs (seminars, conferences, retreats, workshops) dealing with pastoral care or family systems, etc. you have attended (feel free to use extra pages of paper if necessary):

Please describe, **on a separate page**, in paragraph form, your concept of Specialized Transitional Ministry and why you are drawn to it. Give an indication of how/why the STM role seems to be a good fit to your life situation (spouse, family, etc.).

Provide three references, including names and contact information such as telephone numbers and an email address. Please note that Thrive will be interviewing two other people who have also observed you in ministry in order to gain their input on the question of your suitability for this kind of ministry. The reference form (see below) is included, and we ask that you distribute it to:

- A council, pastor or board member of the church or ministry you have served in a formal or informal capacity prior to now.
- A pastor, board or council member of the church you currently attend or serve.
- A peer or colleague (pastor, ministry partner, etc.).

### Background Disclosure

In order to ensure that STM ministry is conducted ethically and with transparency you are asked to respond to the following statements by typing or printing an "X" next to the appropriate answer. There is opportunity for explanation if you so desire.

1. Have you ever been the subject of official discipline by a CRC consistory or classis where you pastored?

a) Suspended? YES NO

b) Deposed? YES NO

2. Is any official disciplinary action pending at the present time? YES NO

3. Have you ever been the subject of official disciplinary proceedings by another denomination that resulted in disciplinary action?

YES NO

4. Are there any other disciplinary proceedings by another denomination pending regarding you at the present time?

5. YES NO

If "YES" please explain:

6. Have you ever been released from service in a congregation according to Church Order article 17?

YES NO

If "YES" please explain:

**Please be aware that PCR will conduct a criminal background check on you. Your part of that process is to answer the following questions.**

7. Has a civil lawsuit, criminal charge, or ecclesiastical complaint been sustained against you for sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation or misconduct, physical abuse, child abuse or financial misconduct?

YES NO

8. Have you ever been convicted of a felony? YES NO  
If "YES" please explain:

9. Has your employment ever been changed because you attempted or actually engaged in:

a) Sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation or misconduct YES NO

b) Physical abuse YES NO

c) Child abuse YES NO

d) Financial misconduct YES NO

If "YES" please explain:

10. Has your employment ever been changed in order to avoid facing or to avoid being terminated because of charges of actual or attempted:

a) Sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation or misconduct YES NO

b) Physical abuse YES NO

c) Child abuse YES NO

d) Financial misconduct YES NO

If "YES" please explain:

*I recognize my responsibility to update this background disclosure in a timely manner should there be a change of status in any of the issues named above.*

*I consent to sharing the above information with Thrive staff, and if I am submitting this document electronically then I acknowledge that my typed name on this form functions as my electronic signature.*

Signature:

Date:

Type or print your name:







8. Do you recommend this applicant as an STM in the Christian Reformed Church?

\_\_\_\_\_ Highly recommend

\_\_\_\_\_ Recommend with reservations

\_\_\_\_\_ Recommend

\_\_\_\_\_ Do not recommend

(if you checked "Recommend with reservations" or "Do not recommend", please explain)

Feel free to provide additional comments on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this form.

Your Name:

Your Church Role:

Email Address:

Phone number:

Name and Location of Church:

Date:

Signature:

After completing and signing this form, please email it to [ddenhaan@crcna.org](mailto:ddenhaan@crcna.org) or mail it directly to:

CRCNA  
Thrive– Attn: Rev. Dave Den Haan  
1700 28th Street SE  
Grand Rapids MI 49508-1407