

Pastoral Transition Workshop

MANAGING THE CHANGE OF PASTOR WITH GRACE, GRATITUDE, & HOPE

Courage and Faith in Times of Change

- Any change makes people anxious!
 - Even good, well-planned change
 - Especially unexpected change



- Anxious people/churches act in predictable ways:

Anxious people/churches act in predictable ways:

- They get reactive.



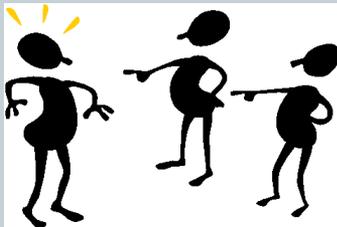
Anxious people/churches act in predictable ways:

- They herd together.



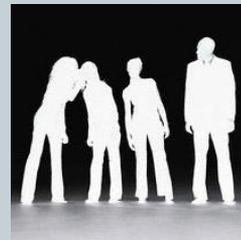
Anxious people/churches act in predictable ways:

- They blame others (especially the conference, sometimes people in the church).



Anxious people/churches act in predictable ways:

- They communicate indirectly.



Anxious people/churches act in predictable ways:

- They try to do everything – or they pull back from doing anything.



Good leadership can make all the difference!

- Give the church a sense of the big picture.
- Name the difficulty, grief, uncertainty.
- Provide clear tasks.
- Stay on course!



The Pastor's Role:

- Stay calm and positive.
- Always take the high road. Always.
- Be clear about how the appointment process works.
- Help the Transition Team work through the details.
- Allow others' grief and anxiety.
- Manage your own grief and anxiety.
- Keep folks focused on the big picture.
- Avoid alliances, cut-off, comparisons.

Lay Leadership's Role

- Stay calm and positive.
- Work through your own grief and anxiety, and help the church do this too.
- Help create a graceful ending.
- Help create a hopeful beginning.
- Keep the church focused on the big picture.
- Utilize the Transition Team.

The Transition Team

- Membership
 - SPRC, lay leader, lay member, Trustee representative
 - others with gifts (i.e. hospitality) for this work
 - Pastor
- Creates a time-table for leaving and entering tasks.
- Assigns responsibilities, follows up.
- Works with outgoing and incoming pastors.
- Helps shepherd the grief process.
- Reports to the DS for a year, then disbands. (reporting form is in section 2 of the Transition Notebook)

Cross-Cultural Realities of the appointment process

The UMC is a global church, with pastors and congregations of increasing ethnic diversity.



“IN SOME WAYS, EVERY APPOINTMENT IS A CROSS-CULTURAL APPOINTMENT.”

- Be aware of this church’s/pastor’s individuality.
- Incoming pastor: get to know this church’s culture.
- Receiving church: recognize that this pastor will be different than the last one, and do things differently.
- Transition Team: identify and communicate “sacred cows” to the new pastor.
- Transition Team: help church remember the gifts/possibilities of new leadership.
- Assistance from DS/conference is available for multi-ethnic appointments.

Leave-Taking with Grace



WE DO TRANSITION TOGETHER:

- ***TRANSITION TEAM**
- ***OUTGOING PASTOR**
- ***INCOMING PASTOR**

Pastor: Tell the Truth about the Move

- Remind folks: the UMC is an itinerant system.
- If you asked for a move, say so, and why.
- If you didn’t ask for a move, explain reasons why this move is being made
 - What is needed in the church to which you are moving
 - Way that this move will benefit you
- You can be sad and excited, both. So can the church.

Churches don’t have to choose who to love.

- You don’t have to forget the former pastor!
- Plan for the transition.
- Welcoming the new pastor well lays solid groundwork for future ministry.
- Plan for the transition.
- Pray for the pastors, the Bishop and Cabinet. And your church.
- Plan for the transition.



Say Goodbye in Healthy Ways

- Show love, regard, even grief for departing pastor. When appropriate, do an “exit interview.”
- Provide public opportunities to say “thank you” and “goodbye.”
- Give the pastor the last two weeks of June off; at least one “Transition Sunday” at the end of June for an emotional buffer between pastors.



Ministerial Etiquette

- The former pastor may only return upon invitation from the current pastor.
- The new pastor needs to connect with the church through significant life-stage events.
- Do not put the new pastor in the uncomfortable situation of deciding whether to invite you back.



Managing Social Media



- “The line over which we must not cross when it comes to pastoral transition is wide and gray, thanks to the expansive nature of social media.” Bruce Reyes-Chow, *The Definitive-ish Guide to Using Social Media in the Church*
- Some Suggestions:
 - Avoid overusing social media during the transition
 - State clearly in advance how you will utilize social media
 - Don't be pastor for your former congregants on social media
 - Don't rely on social media to get to know your new congregation

Exit Interview with the Pastor

- An exit interview can:
 - properly close the existing pastoral relationship
 - transfer key information and projects; resolve loose ends
 - gather insights for a more fruitful future appointment.
- To be conducted by the Transition Team chairperson, lay leader, and/or SPRC chairperson.
- The District Superintendent may be included in potentially confrontational situations.
- Detailed instructions in the Transition Workbook, Section 2

Entering with Hope: Starting Well

LAYING A SOLID GROUNDWORK FOR FUTURE MINISTRY

Preparing for the New Pastor



- Prepare Spiritually:
 - Open your hearts and minds to the new pastor
 - Begin praying daily for the new pastor and family
 - Invite congregation members to send cards of welcome
 - Identify a person to serve as liaison between the new pastor and congregation.

Preparing for the New Pastor

- Prepare administratively:
 - Read “The Point of Appointments”
 - Clarify lay leadership’s expectations and priorities
 - Identify critical agenda items for first few months, first year.
 - Provide administrative papers:
 - ✦ copies of pictorial directories, church assessments
 - ✦ six months of newsletters, email blasts, worship bulletins
 - ✦ 3 years of church conference booklets, statistical reports, financial records



Preparing for the New Pastor

- Develop an active transition plan.
 - Invite new pastor to meet with Transition Team
 - Share urgent matters with new pastor:
 - ✦ Critically ill members
 - ✦ Applications still in process
 - ✦ Safe Sanctuary issues, etc.



Planning for the Move In

- Date, means, time frame, payment plan
- Who will meet pastor and moving van with keys?
- Offer child care if needed by pastor’s family.
- Ensure the parsonage is ready:
 - Clean
 - Parsonage manual
 - Flowers, etc for hospitality
 - Stock fridge (check for allergies!)
 - Items for kids, pets as needed.



Welcoming the New Pastor

- Plan worship for first Sunday
 - New pastor is introduced with family
 - New pastor helps plan first Sunday but doesn’t lead the whole service (may be part of liturgy, communion)
 - Congregation may present a stole, lay hands on pastor, etc.
- Welcome reception
- Church tour
 - Where things are, who to call, etc
- Orientation to office, records
 - Keys, passwords, computers, equipment

Introduction to Congregation

- Plan one-on-one meetings with church leaders.
- Make introductions to those in need of pastoral care.
 - Volunteer to accompany pastor to initial visit.
- Plan small group meetings – in homes if possible – to allow pastor to get to know the congregation.
- Make a map of where people live.
- Wear nametags in worship!

Develop a Team!

- Orientation of new pastor to committee agendas
- Sharing the calendar
- “Team Building Event”
 - work on forms
 - identify leadership roles/expectations
 - set priorities for 3/6/9/12 months.
- Monthly SPRC Meetings
- Transition Team evaluates at 3 month intervals for one year



Introduction to Community

- Basic community resources
 - Doctors, dentists, baby-sitters, shopping, restaurants
- Introductions to area clergy, community leaders, school personnel
- Introductions to hospitals, nursing homes, funeral directors
 - Remind them to contact new pastor, not former pastor!
- Prepare media statement for paper, website, etc.

A Word to the Wise

- Incoming pastors: learn about your congregation and town before you arrive!
 - When was the church founded?
 - Any trauma, merger, misconduct?
 - Important familial relationships within congregation?
 - Significant town history.

History Sharing Night

- Create a timeline of the church's history to:
 - Give the congregation a chance to tell the important stories of the church's life and ministry
 - Give the pastor a chance to hear the stories, explore the deeper meanings of the church's past, connect with the congregation
 - Give everyone a chance to move forward together from a common experience.



History Sharing Night – cont'd

- Plan about 3 hours, and include a meal
 - Provide Childcare!
 - An outside facilitator allows pastor and laity to participate fully
- Create the timeline:
 - Put 20 feet of newsprint on a wall for the timeline
 - Give out markers, encourage people to write significant dates, events, people on timeline



History Sharing Night – cont'd

- As a group, talk through the timeline, noting key stories and events
- Include both positive and negative events – pay attention to managing emotions as needed
- Finally, ask some general questions:
 - Where have we seen God at work in the life of this church?
 - What have been/are our strengths?
 - What have been/are our challenges?
 - What can be our trajectory into the future? What is God's dream for this church?
- Close the History Sharing Night with prayer, song.
- Detailed instructions in Transition Notebook, Section 2

As you move through
this time of transition,

**May God bless you with
unexpected grace, and
work powerfully in you
and in your church.**