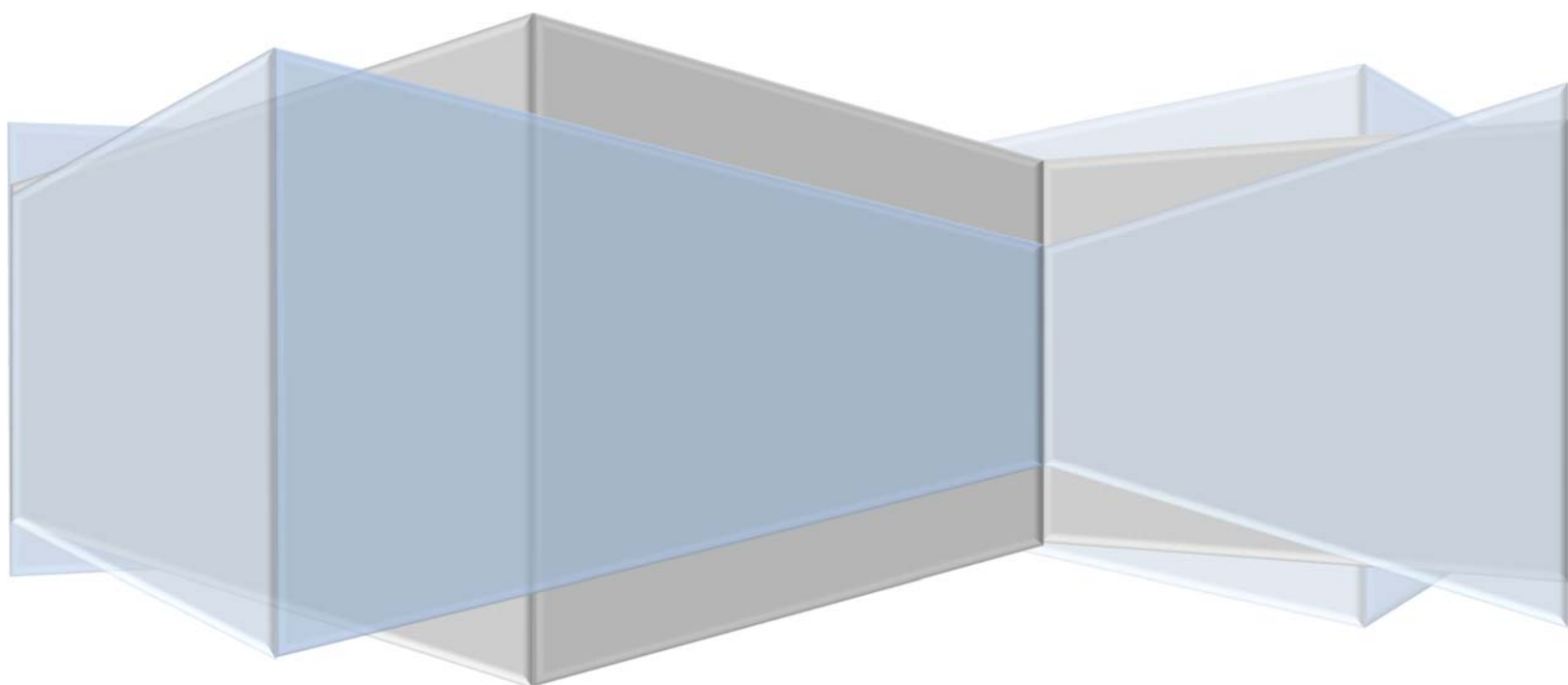


GREAT LAKES REGION OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH

Transition Resource for Pastors and Churches



Purpose: to develop a resource for incoming and outgoing Pastors and their churches to use to insure a healthy transition.

Focus:

- General guidelines on roles in transition: who is responsible for what?
- Preparation: what should the incoming and outgoing Pastor do before transition occurs?
- Transition: what should the incoming Pastor do the first weeks in place?
- Pressing forward: what should the incoming Pastor do within the first few months?

I) General Roles and Lines of Authority:

1. Transition Committee:

It is suggested that a transition committee be formed to address all needed aspects of a healthy change. Typically, the chair of the LBA and/or Search Committee Chair are the primary lay person responsible for insuring a healthy welcome of the new pastor and an appropriate and heartfelt farewell for the pastor/family.

2. Lay Leader and other Officers:

The chair of the Transition or Search Committee will consult and work with the Lay Leader, Trustees, Parsonage Committee (if applicable) and others to plan for a smooth transition.

3. Ways to be supportive:

The chair of the Transition/Search Committee is encouraged to stay in close contact with the pastor, finding ways to be supportive. The pastor is the one who will feel the most stress and pressure in the move. It is well to remember that:

- a) Every pastor/family touches certain individuals in very special ways. There are always those who grieve when “their” pastor moves no matter what the circumstances.
- b) Pastors/families also grieve knowing they are leaving loved ones behind.
- c) The LBA is responsible to make sure the congregation and pastor are given an opportunity to say goodbye in a meaningful, concrete way. **This event should not be the night before a pastor moves ☺. Consult with the pastor to schedule the time.** The Transition/Search committee should make sure some group takes the lead and such an event (i.e. a reception or fellowship meal) is held.
- d) The LBA is the group to think through and communicate with other church leaders concerning ways in which to express appreciation for the pastor/family. **If there are children in the pastor’s family, you may want to consider ways in which they can be affirmed. Being the “preacher’s kid” is not always easy!**
- e) Be conscious of some members feeling betrayed or hurt by the pastor’s moving. At times people pull away from the pastor to avoid dealing with the pain of separation.
- f) Pray for wisdom to model for others in the congregation ways of facing grief/anger and

dealing with these emotions in a healthy way.

- g) Be sure to celebrate some of the high moments of your life together as a congregation with the pastor. Hopefully there will be times for joyful remembrances and laughter as well as tears!

4. **Finances:**

The chair of the PPR Committee needs to work with the pastor and Finance Committee to make sure there is a healthy and fair financial transition also. If the District needs to step in and help in this process, please inform them.

Other key items...

1. **Extend an early welcome!** Encourage some of the church leaders to write notes/letters of welcome to the new pastor/family after the formal announcement is made to the congregation.
2. **Remember the children:** If there are children/youth in the incoming pastor's family, consider ways to help them feel welcome. You are encouraged to think creatively. Prepare for entertainment during early days.
3. **Formal announcement:** Find creative and helpful ways to inform the congregation of the incoming pastor and a bit about them and their family.
4. **Welcome reception?** Discuss with the incoming pastor plans to welcome his/her family. This can include such things as a reception, fellowship gathering, neighborhood groups, etc.
5. **Moving plans:** Find ways the church can assist in the move in various ways if needed.
6. **First Sunday:** Discuss roles in terms of presenting the pastor/family to the congregation. Mutually agree how this will be done in the context of worship/reception/order of worship.
7. **Meeting with new pastor:** Pastors role: make sure there have been clearly defined parameters for the pastor around job description, salary, days off, vacation, polices, etc.
8. **Church leaders' meetings:** Consider arranging a meeting with key leaders from various groups in the church with the new pastor. This might be a dinner or an informal gathering.

Hopefully the new pastor will not be put in a position of needing to make major decisions during his/her first few weeks. This beginning time ought to provide opportunities for getting to know the congregation.

9. **Congregation understanding:** Discuss ways of encouraging the congregation to welcome the new pastor and to be patient as he/she learns names/traditions of the church.

Please remember that these are not rules but suggestions to stimulate your thinking. Not all will apply, but may will be helpful.

General Role of the Outgoing Pastor

The way in which you say goodbye is crucial to both how you will begin your new pastorate and how you will create the environment for your successor. Healthy closure is important for you, your family and congregation and you may experience grief as you prepare to leave. Sometimes there is also relief (and you do not need to feel guilty about that). It is natural to experience excitement as you anticipate your new appointment. Regardless, this time before moving will be hectic, full and stressful. You are encouraged to be kind to yourself; to pace yourself so that you can begin your new pastorate with a sense of freshness and energy.

The following suggestions are merely reminders...

1. Consulting with LBA/Transition Chair:

Consult fully and frequently with these chairmen regarding all the concerns pertaining to your leaving. It is also well to include other important leaders as you see necessary.

2. Contact your successor:

Take time to offer as much help as you can! There are specific ways to do that listed below in transition. It is important that you do all you can to set your successor up for success! After all it is God's Kingdom that is at stake. Be appropriate in your comments and consider that your words will have a weighted effect on the incoming pastor (for good or bad).

3. Share feelings:

Honestly convey to the LBA and committee leadership ways that the congregation can be helpful in the transition. For example, some pastors/families want help with packing while other pastors/families prefer as much privacy as possible. Share these and other feelings and ideas/thoughts that are pertinent to your situation.

4. Seeking closure:

Some pastors will find it helpful to make a list of persons with whom they need to seek closure. A practical way to do this is to list those you want to visit with, eat with, telephone or to whom you want to write a note. By the way, seek closure before you move, not after.

5. Be sensitive:

Take the time to reflect on and seek to understand how various people in the congregation feel about your leaving. Listen with your "inner ear." Some members may tend to be passively aggressive and it is really a reflection of their grief, fear of loss or sense of betrayal that you are now leaving them. This is a time that calls for your finest pastoral graces and your expressed excitement about the future of the church!

6. Celebrate!

Seek to find ways of celebrating the good pieces of your tenure and ministry.

7. Interpret your leaving:

Find ways to interpret to the congregation the pastoral change process through letters, newsletters, pulpit, web site and other ways of communication. Invite the congregation to rejoice with you in your new opportunity for ministry. Help them to understand that you will be "passing the baton" onto the new pastor and will not be addressing any church related issues once you are gone.

8. Support for your successor:

Do all that you can to show support for your successor. Tell the congregation that you will cease to be their pastor as of moving day. Do not be misled into believing that the church will fall apart when you leave or that your relationship is so important to former members that you must respond by returning for weddings, funerals or counseling sessions. On moving day, just lay down the pastoral mantle of your present congregation. **Relinquish your keys and your control!** Rest your ministry for your present church with God.

9. Be creative:

Use this resource and discuss with your LBA and Transition Committee some of the ways they can prepare for a new pastor; encourage them to be sensitive and creative.

10. No lame duck!

You are the pastor of your present church until you move and are responsible for what happens on your "watch." Remember, people don't necessarily remember how you came to the church, but will certainly remember how you left (good or bad).

11. Pray!

Above all, pray for patience, sensitivity, understanding and love in working through the transition. God still has a stake in your ministry!

12. Anticipate:

Look to the future with joy and anticipation!

13. Goodbye means Goodbye!

Remember that saying goodbye includes an understanding that when the pastor leaves, he/she does not return for pastoral functions (unless there is a significant reason to). You will have a new pastor for those ministries. Both pastor and laity are encouraged to follow this very important professional procedure. Too often, new ministry/ministries are handicapped by this problem. This is KEY:

**Celebrate the joys, forgive the mistakes and
bid farewell with grace!**

Checklist for Outgoing Pastor:

This list suggests things to consider as you move. You may have your own checklist that is more useful than this.

1. _____ Consult with LBA regarding all the concerns pertaining to your leaving. Keep key lay leaders in the “loop of information.”
2. _____ Discuss various aspects of moving with those who need to know.
3. _____ Arrange meetings with critical people who will help in transition.
4. _____ Check with treasurer on paying your salary/benefits until (set a date).
5. _____ Give definite information to successor as to what transition time frames will look like. Who is taking care of what, when.
6. _____ Send copies of orders of worship, newsletter, pictorial directory, brochures, etc. of your church to your successor as soon as possible.
7. _____ Get change of address cards from post office and notify publishers and others of new address.
8. _____ Make sure someone prepares to greet new pastor/family on moving day with food, flowers, etc. as expressions of welcome.
9. _____ Leave your new address and phone numbers with pertinent people.
10. _____ Complete the Equipping New Pastor Checklist (Next Page)

Equipping the New Pastor Checklist (To be completed by outgoing pastor)



Meetings to set up

<input type="checkbox"/>	With new pastor to discuss the “Job”
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange meetings with critical people who will help in transition
<input type="checkbox"/>	Schedule a time to discuss church history, mission, vision, major milestones, roadblocks
<input type="checkbox"/>	Organize time to meet with current staff and ministry leaders
<input type="checkbox"/>	Organize time to meet community contacts (school directors, business owners, etc...)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Introduce key “influencers” in the church
<input type="checkbox"/>	



Things to do

<input type="checkbox"/>	Deal with staff or board issues before new pastor takes over
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide church calendar with all projected dates
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide information on traditions (sacred cows) that are unique to your church
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide a summary of previous series and messages taught
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide a quick run-down of families/pictures/names. Note red flags



Administrative and business items

<input type="checkbox"/>	Written policies and procedures
<input type="checkbox"/>	Systems, passwords
<input type="checkbox"/>	District Responsibilities (monthly stats, yearly stats)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Give attendance/membership/salvation numbers currently and historically
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lease/facility/property/equipment information



Financial

<input type="checkbox"/>	Copy of financial reports for past 12 months
<input type="checkbox"/>	Copy of financial procedures
<input type="checkbox"/>	Status and copy of current budget
<input type="checkbox"/>	Introduce treasurer
<input type="checkbox"/>	

II) PREPARATION FOR TRANSITION - Succeeding Pastor

Church Preparation:

1. Develop sermon series/messages ahead of time that has flexibility, so you can hit the ground running and not have to spend a ton of time in sermon prep the first month or so.
2. Possibly have someone else preach for 4 weeks so you have time to get a better idea of what the church is about. It also gives you time to build relationships. Pick up bits and pieces of each service such as greeting, announcements, so your face is out there.
3. Explore and adjust to community leading up to transition.
 - What factors are in place?
 - “Culture”
 - “Sacred Cows”
 - Where is God working and what is not working
4. Take time to pray and recalibrate the vision, but be prepared to make adjustments and course corrections to it. This is something people can get excited about as you come in with fresh ideas.
5. Ask people from the church about the vision, mission, and purpose of the church. Have another person with you (spouse) so you have someone to talk through perception of what was said. See where it stands.
6. Need full disclosure so demand that at every turn.
7. Get the District involved to talk more with leaders in the church to get accurate picture.
 - Accountability, I think that a Pastor needs to have people from the district to answer to in order to make sure the Checklist is being carried out.
 - Have a district representative talk with the current board to make sure everything is on the up and up and to hear about any warning signs.
 - Possible outgoing Pastor Interview; this will insure that the Pastor has done his part to make certain the body is ready for the new pastor and that the transition period is as smooth and seamless as possible.
8. Complete New Pastor Checklist (Next page)

New Pastor Checklist



Meetings to set up

<input type="checkbox"/>	With current pastor to discuss the “Job”
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange meetings with critical people who will help in transition
<input type="checkbox"/>	Schedule a time to discuss church history, mission, vision, major milestones, roadblocks with
<input type="checkbox"/>	Organize time to meet with current staff and ministry leaders
<input type="checkbox"/>	Organize time to meet community contacts (school directors, business owners, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Meet “influencers” in the church



Things to do

<input type="checkbox"/>	Be brought into the loop of staff or board issues
<input type="checkbox"/>	Receive church calendar with all projected dates
<input type="checkbox"/>	Receive information on traditions (sacred cows) that are unique to this church
<input type="checkbox"/>	Receive a summary of previous series and messages taught
<input type="checkbox"/>	Receive a quick run-down of families/pictures/names. Note red flags.



Administrative and business items

<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain written policies and procedures
<input type="checkbox"/>	Review systems, get passwords
<input type="checkbox"/>	Understand District Responsibilities (monthly stats, yearly stats)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Know attendance/membership/salvation numbers currently and historically
<input type="checkbox"/>	Understand Lease/facility/property/equipment information



Financial

<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain financial reports for past 12 months
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain financial procedures
<input type="checkbox"/>	Review status and copy of current budget
<input type="checkbox"/>	Meet with treasurer
<input type="checkbox"/>	



Personal

<input type="checkbox"/>	Have a mentor in place
<input type="checkbox"/>	Involve spouse and prepare them the best you can
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adjust financially
<input type="checkbox"/>	Review housing options: you may want to rent instead of buy
<input type="checkbox"/>	

NOTES/MISC

III) TRANSITION:

1. Spend time learning and meeting with leaders and get them on board.
2. Developed healthy rhythms right away, setting good parameters
 - a. Protect family time
 - b. Plan “personal time” and carve it out!
3. Prioritize Tasks
4. Continued truthful assessment of leadership and potential
 - a. Relational connection of key leaders
 - b. Financial realities – nuts and bolts
 - c. Evaluate written policies
5. Have open hours that congregants can meet with you

IV) PRESSING FORWARD POST TRANSITION:

1. Tap into district resources (on the District web site)
2. Get peoples “stories” meet with as many as possible
3. Pour into leaders/staff- meet with consistency: pour into LBA and review job descriptions of each member and also present staff members
4. Hold regular staff meetings
5. Develop prayer time and focus
6. Say “no” for first four months – hold off on adding initiatives, get LBA on board with this concept
7. Begin to empower people, not micro-manage, or become completely hands off – find a healthy balance.

Procedures for the Pastoral Nominating Committee once a candidate is selected:

1. The Pastoral Nominating Committee makes a recommendation to the Local Board of Administration (LBA). It is the LBA who is charged with officially voting on the candidate who will be brought to the congregation. Quite often this takes place automatically because the Pastoral Nominating Committee is made up of the entire LBA. If that is so, great. If not, then the LBA will need to come together and officially vote. The vote is simple: "We recommend _____ as the candidate to the Name of church congregation."
2. The Vice-chair or another representative of the LBA will stand before the congregation on a Sunday morning and let them know that after a selection process that involved looking carefully at several candidates (who were drawn from nearly 100 candidates which the D.S. receives on an annual basis and matches to meet the specific and articulated criteria of the LBA of Name of church the LBA has chosen _____ as the Pastoral Candidate to take the church into its God-ordained future. If it was a unanimous vote, I would let the congregation know that. It would be good to spend a few minutes talking about the candidate's background and his/her call to ministry and call to the church.
3. Inform the congregation on that same Sunday morning the date of the pastoral vote (which must take place no sooner than two weeks after the announcement is made on a Sunday morning).
4. On the prescribed Sunday, the candidate would preach the Sunday morning service. Ballots would be passed out as people walk in and a vote would be taken toward the completion of the Sunday morning service. Ballots should have four markings on them:
 - Yes
 - No
 - Member
 - Non-Member

You can allow non-members to vote because we believe the candidate wants to know how everyone feels; but only the membership votes are "binding."

To the Candidate: The candidate would have one week after the vote was taken to say "yes" to the vote. In our District, the DS requires all pastoral candidates to give him their verbal "Yes" that they will take this position if the vote is above 85%. In other words, he doesn't want you to get an 87% vote and then turn it down. That is not fair to the congregation. So, by preaching the "candidating message" on that prescribed Sunday, you are saying that you will say "yes" as long as the vote is better than 85%. And that you can say yes with a vote less than that.

After the vote is taken, please send the results to the District office at office@thegl.org so we can keep a record of it.

To the Vice-Chair: please inform the other candidates that the LBA has chosen to go with another candidate.