

# Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor



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# Introduction

This manual is designed to provide guidelines and recommendations to ministers and Pastoral Selection Committees involved in the search for and selection of a minister to fill the position of senior pastor. The selection process for associate ministers is usually contained in internal church procedures and is not included in this manual.

The manual includes guidelines for the departing pastor, the incoming pastor, the Pastoral Selection Committee, and the appropriate Network executive officers involved in the process.

All Pastoral Selection Committees are encouraged to carefully review this document prior to beginning the pastoral selection process.

We appreciate the help of the Northwest Ministry Network, and especially NWMN Secretary Don Detrick, in drafting this document.

# Opening Considerations

## 1. The Pastoral Selection Committee

The Constitution and Bylaws of the local church usually give direction as to who will serve on the Pastoral Selection Committee. The constituency of the Pastoral Selection Committee can take several forms and the Bylaws may authorize any of the following to serve:

- a. The church board
- b. The church board and selected church members
- c. Church members and representatives from the church board
- d. Church members other than the church board

It is essential that the Constitution and Bylaws be followed accurately. Where the Bylaws are silent, or are not prescriptive, the church board bears the responsibility to determine the makeup of the Pastoral Selection Committee. The board is encouraged to select members who represent a cross-section of the congregation. Attention should be given to the inclusion of women, diverse age groups, and members of both longer and shorter tenures in the church. All members of the Pastoral Selection Committee should be marked by respect, maturity and spiritual discernment.

One common approach in forming Pastoral Selection Committees is to select people who have not been supportive of the previous pastor or who are seen as “fringe” members. Sometimes the thinking is that if we get them involved, they will then become a more vital part of the church. That approach does not usually result in the desired fruit. The Pastoral Selection Committee is not the arena to test a person’s loyalty to and love for the church. Also, the board should refrain from appointing pastoral staff members, employees, and other Assemblies of God ministers to the Pulpit Committee.

The size of the committee will vary with the size of the church. Too large a committee can be unwieldy and make it difficult to have everyone present for meetings. Too small a committee can result in a less than representative group and a very heavy work load for a few people.

## 2. Issues of Confidentiality

Most of the work of the committee is confidential until a candidate for the pastorate is presented to the congregation. By confidential, we mean that what takes place in the pastoral selection process is not shared with others, even our best friends or spouses. It is a matter of integrity.

Confidentiality is essential for the sake of potential candidates. A candidate may presently hold a position. They may or may not have clear intentions to

leave their present post, but want to explore a pastoral opening as part of the process for determining the will of God. If word of the candidate inquiries filter back to their congregation, it could prematurely or unnecessarily place a present position at risk. Unnecessary confusion will then arise for all concerned.

Confidentiality is also essential for the integrity of the selection process. If word gets out to the congregation who the different candidates are, it is possible that some members may begin to campaign for a particular minister being considered. We would like to think that would never occur, but experience has proven otherwise. It puts additional pressure on the committee that is trying to make unbiased, objective, and Spirit-directed decisions.

### **3. Communicating the Process**

Balancing confidentiality is the need for communication to the church. Regular and consistent communication with the church body is critical to avoid misinformation and instability. The members need to have the sense that everything is under control, and that a good process is established and working. Such communication can be through letters to the members, announcements in church mailers and bulletins, or verbal announcements in the services.

Among the things that can be communicated are:

- a. The members selected to serve on the Pulpit Committee
- b. The general process being followed
- c. The progress being made: The committee has met three times this past month. We have visited four different churches to listen to prospective candidates. We have narrowed our list to three persons. We met with a representative from the Alaska Ministry Network. Communicate those things which will provide a sense of stability and progress.
- d. The announcement of a specific candidate and the processes to be followed in calling and electing the new pastor.

Do not be in a hurry. Do not allow members to pressure you because you have not taken action according to their time schedule. You **do** want to act with dispatch. Yet churches have made terrible mistakes in pastoral selection because they rushed to get a pastor. As previously mentioned, selecting a pastor is the most important decision a church will ever make. As goes the shepherd, so go the sheep. Without good leadership placed in a church in the will of God, the prospect for growth and development in that church is very dim.

### **4. Developing a Pastoral Profile**

Before considering any candidate, the Pastoral Selection Committee is encouraged to develop a profile of the type of pastoral leadership they believe their church needs. Matters to be considered include:

**a. Past history, present condition, future vision**

The spiritual condition of the church at this point in time and where it desires to move in the future are essential matters to be considered. For instance, if the previous pastor was strong in evangelism, you may want a pastor who can continue with that same emphasis, or you may want one with a strong teaching, discipleship ministry.

**b. Leadership style**

Different ministers have different gifts. The expression of those gifts result in a particular style of leadership. The committee may feel that a change of leadership style is needed, but they are cautioned not to radically change the style, especially if the church is doing well. Abrupt change can create instability, uneasiness, and defections.

**c. Church style**

Each church has a certain style and established approaches to ministry. People usually attend because they like that style of ministry. Consequently, selecting a pastor who will create massive disruption of the accustomed approach will often be counterproductive. However, when a church has reached a plateau or is declining, a change may be in order.

**d. Community culture**

Some ministers will fit more comfortably in a rural setting, and others in a metropolitan culture. Some know how to fit in, but others never adapt to their situation. Some thrive in an isolated setting, but others are always pining for the city. Know your culture, and get to know the minister well enough to know whether or not he can adjust. Remember, past performance is the best predictor of future success.

Once the pastoral profile has been developed, the committee can use it as a grid by which to evaluate prospective pastors. The profile should never be so rigid as to disallow positive candidates. It should not be so detailed and lofty that only the Apostle Paul would be able to measure up! But it can be a helpful tool in the selection process.

**5. Providing Interim Ministry**

This task will be the responsibility of the church board. They will consider the needs of the church during the transition period, be sensitive to the distinction between an interim preacher and an interim pastor, and review carefully the qualities needed in interim leadership.

Several options are available to the church board:

- a. A pastoral staff member can fill the pulpit.
- b. A respected minister/member in the church could do the preaching.
- c. Specific persons recommended by the Alaska Ministry Network Office could be considered. Before engaging any minister for the transition period, the Network should be consulted as to their effectiveness, past fruitfulness, and

any red flags.

- d. Semi-retired, but active, ministers have much to offer in wisdom and strength.

It is of critical importance that the interim minister **not** have any desire to be considered as a candidate for the senior pastorate. This should be understood from the beginning. The interim pastor should make a commitment that he/she will not seek the permanent post. The church board should not utilize any minister unwilling to make that commitment.

Whether the church has a single speaker throughout the transition period, or a variety of speakers, may be determined by the length of the interim period. Sometimes a combination of methods is used. Having the same speaker, at least on Sunday mornings, provides a stability and certainty that different speakers will not provide.

The board and interim minister will want to come to an agreement as to remunerations and reimbursement of expenses before ministry begins. These will be determined in part by the level and length of involvement the minister will have. A clear understanding of how often he/she will preach, whether he/she should be in the office during the week, what days and hours, etc., should also be clarified.

## Suggestions for the Pastoral Selection Committee

1. Be much in prayer.
2. Follow the guidelines as set forth in this document. Each local Assemblies of God Church is affiliated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God and the Alaska Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God. Although autonomous (not independent), each church has agreed to be governed by the Constitution and Bylaws of the General Council and the AKMN. The General Council Constitution requires that an Assemblies of God Church be pastored by a credentialed Assemblies of God minister (Article XI, Section 1, a, 6). Most Assemblies of God churches also have this provision in their own constitution and bylaws. **Therefore, the Pastoral Selection Committee should not consider candidates who are not credentialed with the Assemblies of God.**
3. The church should provide the office of the Network Superintendent with the name, address and phone number of the Pastoral Selection Committee chairman so proper communication may be maintained.
4. Upon request, the network will submit a recommended list of prospective candidates. All official recommendations will be made by letter from the Network office.
5. Other credentialed Assemblies of God ministers from within or outside the Alaska Ministry Network may submit their names and resume. In this event, the Pastoral Selection Committee has a responsibility to request recommendations from the minister's former church, his/her presbyter, or the district superintendent. (Note: If the prospective candidate is from outside the Alaska Ministry Network, a recommendation from his/her district superintendent is required).
6. The Pastoral Selection Committee should send a letter to all candidates who submit their names and resumes, thanking them for their interest, stating that all applications are under review, and that they will be informed if further consideration will be given to them.
7. Interviews should be conducted with those who seem to be the most likely candidates for the pastorate, prior to any invitation. Expenses for the candidate who is invited for an interview should be the responsibility of the church. (If the candidate is pastoring, a representative of the Pastoral Selection Committee could attend a service to observe. A phone call to see if the pastor will be in his pulpit that day could save time and disappointment.)
8. Following the interviews, one candidate should be selected by the Pastoral Selection Committee to be presented as their nominee for the pastorate. A vote should be conducted immediately following the candidate's presentation to the congregation, usually after the Sunday night service, in accord with the Bylaws of the church. The candidate's expenses should be paid by the church. **NOTE: Under no circumstances should the congregation be presented with more than one candidate to "try out" and force them to vote between individuals. This is a**



**recipe for confusion and division and most ministers would not consider allowing their name to stand in such a situation.**

9. Balloting must be by secret ballot. No proxy votes should be allowed. Blank ballots must be ignored and not counted as ballots cast. Election should be based on two-thirds majority of votes cast or according to the church Bylaws if they indicate otherwise.
10. If there is no election, a second nominee should be presented at a later date, or the interview process reactivated. This process should be continued until a selection has been made. *We strongly recommend that only one candidate at a time be considered for election as opposed to a "run-off" between two or more candidates.*
11. When a pastor has been selected:
  - a. Notify the newly elected minister.
  - b. Notify the network office.
  - c. Send a letter to each person who submitted their name, informing them of the selection and thanking them for their interest.

**Official Network Procedure**

- (1) Upon being contacted, the Alaska Ministry Network will place your church on the open church list.
- (2) Our office will consult with the church pastoral selection committee and help in any way possible, upon request.
- (3) Upon request, the Alaska Ministry Network will submit resumes, which may have been submitted to the network office.

## Reactions to the Pastor's Resignation

Perhaps there is no relationship outside that of the immediate family in which one becomes so involved at a personal level as the relationship of a pastor and his/her congregation. The pastor has led many to faith in Jesus Christ, counseled people in difficult times, and visited them when they were sick, married them, dedicated their children, and buried their loved ones. There is often trauma in the church when the shepherd says, "I am leaving." Church members—especially young persons who moved from childhood to adulthood while this pastor was there, personal friends, ministerial colleagues—all suffer loss. Grief, therefore, is seen to be a natural and normal part of the process of resigning for both the pastor and the people. For the minister's spouse and children, it may be even more difficult.

Other reactions to a Pastor's resignation may be:

**Anxiety, fear, panic:** These come from the thought that the ship may have no helmsman. Expect panic on all sides from nearly everyone. Some even feel the congregation will dry up and blow away unless a new pastor is found tomorrow.

**Guilt and self-doubt:** Some in the congregation may feel guilty for criticizing the pastor and in so doing may have promoted his/her resignation. Persons can experience self-doubt in the same way that a child may feel partly to blame for the death of a parent.

**Anger:** This may occur especially if the pastor leaves under negative circumstances. Anger often is directed toward persons who are perceived as the ones who made the pastor leave and, hence, can leave deep scars.

**Understanding and self-confidence:** It appears that mature people, though sorry to lose a minister, may see it as the pastor's "graduation" to a new and perhaps greater opportunity.

**Sometimes feelings of relief:** In some cases, no strong reaction at all will seem quite natural. This could be true in the case of a pastoral resignation due to illness, or in the unfortunate event of conflict.

All of these are normal reactions. What is important is for the congregation to be aware of, express, and deal with its own peculiar grief reactions before it is ready to embrace new pastoral leadership.

Above all, a biblical understanding of the mission and purpose of the church must undergird the pastoral transition process. Such an understanding may be aided by a visit of a Network official or may be encouraged by the church board. Remember that Christ is the Head of the church. The church is God's, and God desires that the mission of the church be maintained. God has not deserted you.

## FAQ'S

### Frequently Asked Questions during the Pastoral Selection Process

Some churches have found it helpful to publish this sort of information early on in the selection process and make it available throughout. Doing so helps keep people informed and redirects questions that may have to be answered by the committee on an individual basis.

**Q: Why didn't we receive notice of our pastor's resignation until today?**

A: Be very specific in following your Bylaws regarding a pastor's responsibility in resigning.

**Q: When is pastor's resignation effective?**

A: Be upfront in explaining the process and when this will occur.

**Q: How will a new pastor be selected?**

A: Refer to your Bylaws and then be specific as to the process of how the Pastoral Selection Committee plans to proceed.

Here is a sample of what the answers were as it related to a church of a neighboring network in their recent transition:

*We are governed by our church legal documents (Articles of Incorporation, Constitution and Bylaws), and they provide specific instructions for the process of selecting a new senior pastor. In short, here is the process:*

*The official deacon board serves as the Pastoral Search Committee: (They were named)*

*They will seek counsel from the Network and others of their choosing. They will set criteria for candidates as they choose (for example, candidate must be an ordained, Assemblies of God credentialed minister), keeping in mind our past history, present circumstances, vision statement, purposes, core values and the church's ministry model. As part of the process, they will review resumes, check references, and select candidates to interview.*

*They will periodically announce their progress to the congregation, but keep specific details in confidence until one candidate is agreed upon. From the interviews, they will ultimately select one candidate to be announced and presented to the congregation.*

*That candidate will present his or her ministry to the congregation over a weekend (including a dessert social on the Saturday and preaching on Sunday morning), after which (following the Sunday morning services) a business meeting will be held for the purpose of an election. The candidate must receive a 2/3 majority vote of the members present.*

*Please pray for the deacons and allow this process to come to a satisfactory conclusion without lobbying or offering unsolicited advice which can lead to division and confusion (Ephesians 4:3-4). This process is proven to work effectively and is the normal method for Assemblies of God churches across the United States.*

This particular church also printed the portion of their Bylaws that pertained to the senior pastor selection process and distributed that along with the questions and answers.

**Q: Who will be eligible to vote for the new senior pastor?**

A: Only official members of the church in good standing.

**Q: What if I want to become a member so I can vote?**

A: You must meet the qualifications for membership. (Site the Bylaw requirements and procedures.)

**Q: What will happen with the rest of our staff?**

A: Here is an answer to the above questions that was given by one of our churches recently:

*The board has asked all of the staff to stay until we have a new senior pastor and it is hoped that the new senior pastor will want to keep the team together – however, that will be up to each individual team member, the new senior pastor and the deacon board.*

**Q: When will we have a new senior pastor?**

A: Give a projected date as to when you are hoping to have a pastor for the membership to vote on.

**Q: Will one of our present staff pastors become the new senior pastor?**

A: Give an answer that one will be considered, if that is the case, or that no one has expressed interest.

**Q: Who will lead the church in the meantime?**

A: Give the plan of action as to who you have chosen and the method you have chosen to lead the church in the interim period.

**Q: What if I have a friend or relative that I would like to recommend as a candidate to be our new senior pastor?**

A: If he/she is a qualified, ordained Assemblies of God minister, you should encourage him/her to send a resume complete with photo, biography, reference and either an audio or video example of their preaching to the Pastoral Selection Committee at the church address.

## Consideration of Associate Pastor

In some instances, the associate pastor is interested in being considered for the senior pastorate of the church. It is suggested that in order to have a clear and smooth understanding between the church and the associate pastor that the following guidelines be used:

- (1) It is suggested that if the associate pastor is interested in being considered for the senior pastorate that **his/her name be considered before all other names.**
- (2) This allows the Pastoral Search Committee/board to make deliberate decisions concerning the associate pastor's interest and qualifications.
- (3) The associate pastor should submit a resume along with a letter of interest in accordance with the same process that is followed in consideration of other candidates.
- (4) The Pastoral Selection Committee should accept the resume and interview the associate pastor and spouse.
- (5) If the Pastoral Selection Committee feels that they are interested in submitting the associate pastor's name for congregational consideration, the manner in which this is done should be according to the local church's Bylaws.
- (6) If the board and/or Pastoral Selection Committee feels that the associate pastor should not be considered, this will give the associate pastor time to look for another position, and this can be clearly communicated to the members of the church.

## Objectives of the Pastoral Selection Committee

- (1) Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- (2) Endeavor to agree as to the task of the committee.
- (3) Develop a plan of communication with the congregation including the process the committee will follow. This will include periodic announcements during regularly scheduled gatherings; use of church publications; posting on the church website; and special meetings and mailings.
- (4) Establish a procedure for conducting an interview with the prospective pastor. Never make a commitment during the first interview. Simply indicate that the candidate will hear within a certain period regarding the decision.
- (5) Organize information about the church and community which will be of value to the candidate.
- (6) Structure the weekend activities when the prospective pastor will meet the congregation to minister.

- (7) Arrange for proper timing of the congregational business meeting to vote on the prospective pastor, including the required announcements.
- (8) It is recommended that the vote be taken at the close of the regular Sunday service in which the candidate has spoken.
- (9) Report results of the meeting to the Network office.
- (10) Arrange for an installation service with the Network Superintendent or another Network leader.

# Sample Letter to Church Membership

(Date)

Dear Church Family:

For some time now, the Pastoral Selection Committee has been reviewing resumes and interviewing prospective candidates for the pastorate of (name of church).

It is with joy and anticipation that we announce to you that we have invited (name of candidate) to be in our church for ministry on Sunday, (month and day).

Enclosed is some background information about his/her ministry experience, personal background, and family. To allow opportunity for you to become personally acquainted with him/her and his/her family, we have planned a (list what is planned, i.e., dessert social, dinner, fellowship time) at (time, date and place). Bring your family, and let's enjoy this time together.

A church business meeting for the purpose of voting on (name of candidate) is scheduled to follow Sunday's service (date and time).

Please continue to pray with us through the coming weeks for God's will to be done.

Sincerely,

Pastoral Selection Committee  
(Church name)



# The Candidate's Visit

## A Suggestion

- (1) Be sensitive to the needs of the candidate and his/her family.
- (2) If at all possible – especially for the larger church – the candidate and spouse should arrive on Friday afternoon and go directly to the pre-arranged lodging or motel. Depending on the arrival time, a meeting with the committee and the church board (and spouses) should be arranged. An easy evening of relaxation is encouraged.
- (3) Saturday may be given to driving through the area, viewing the church, parsonage (if there is one) and schools.
- (4) A potluck dinner or dessert social could be held on Saturday evening at the church so that the congregation can get acquainted with the candidate. An interview with time for questions and answers would be in order. The meeting should be kept as brief as possible as the next day is a busy day for the candidate.
- (5) While the candidate may visit the Sunday School classes or other small group gatherings, he/she should not be asked to speak or teach, unless he/she desires to do so.
- (6) The morning service should be led by the chairperson of the Pastoral Election Committee or an associate pastor, and the candidate asked only to give the pastoral prayer and the sermon—or only the sermon.
- (7) Where appropriate, the candidate could be in charge of other regularly scheduled services and bring the message, as well.
- (8) Most churches will conduct a business meeting after the services and vote on the candidate at that time. This approach is recommended.

# Prospective Pastor Information Guide

## What a Pastoral Selection Committee Should Know About the Prospective Pastor

1. Of what district is he/she a member?
2. What is his/her current Assemblies of God ministerial credential status?
  - a. Certified Minister
  - b. License to Preach or Specialized Ministries License
  - c. Ordained
3. How do Network officials and other pastors regard the candidate on both a ministry and a personal level?
4. What does his/her present or former church think of him/her?
5. If there were others on his/her church staff, what do they think of him/her?
6. What kind of husband/wife and father/mother is he/she?
7. What is the spouse like and what are her/his abilities as:
  - a. A homemaker/worker on the job.
  - b. A church worker.
8. Are their children well behaved?
9. How does he/she get along with other people?
10. What is his/her experience in ministry?
  - a. What churches has he/she served?
  - b. For how long?
  - c. What Area or Network offices has he/she held?
  - d. On what sectional or district committees has he/she served?
11. Does he/she support the district/network with his/her tithes as prescribed in the Alaska Ministry Network Bylaws?
12. What does he/she believe about:
  - a. What the Bible teaches.
  - b. The Assemblies of God.
13. What are his/her abilities as:
  - a. A preacher.
  - b. A soul winner.
  - c. A teacher.
14. How does he/she plan to find, enlist, and train church workers?
15. What are his/her ideas about worship?

16. What is his/her attitude toward:
  - a. The church budget.
  - b. Salary and housing provisions.
  - c. Stewardship in general.
17. What are his/her ideas about church government?
  - a. How does he/she work with deacons.
  - b. How does he/she work with other church leaders.
  - c. Is he/she familiar with the present Bylaws.
  - d. Does he/she have any recommendations regarding the Bylaws.
18. What is his/her attitude toward:
  - a. Supporting U.S. and World Missions.
  - b. Supporting Alaska Missions.
19. What long-term goals or changes does he/she see as identified with his/her giftedness, abilities, or management style?
  - a. Will he/she desire a significant move toward a style or culture change in the congregation?
  - b. What strategies would he/she employ in effecting such changes?
  - c. What communication strategies will he/she use to convey his/her ideas to the board and church?
  - d. How does he/she characterize his/her management style, e.g., discuss some of the following styles:
    - (1) Delegator (not a detail person) who finds good people and lets them work freely.
    - (2) Is he/she involved in most activities? Does he/she like to check on most things? Does he/she move with caution? Is he/she often very detailed in approaching leadership tasks?
    - (3) Does he/she proceed with caution? Does he/she want to test the water before recommending changes?
    - (4) Does he/she set a direction and then move forward, trying to bring others along?
    - (5) How about time management. Does he/she give "time" a high priority? Does he/she seek to categorize the weeks activities? Does he/she try to avoid non-productive activities?
    - (6) What about time away from the church. How does he/she handle "outside" involvement, e.g., Network events, speaking engagements, etc.?

20. What is his/her attitude toward cooperating with:
  - a. Other Assemblies of God churches.
  - b. The Alaska Ministry Network.
  - c. The General Council.
  - d. Other churches of the community.
21. Does he/she attend meetings of:
  - a. The Section.
  - b. The Network.
  - c. The General Council.
22. Does he/she share in the work of:
  - a. Sectional or regional camps.
  - b. The work of the section.
  - c. The work of the Network.
23. What is his/her physical condition?

This list is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but should serve merely as a guide. The desired information suggested here should be obtained from the following sources: 1) his/her Network leaders, 2) his/her presbyter, 3) former or present board members, 4) the candidate himself/herself.

While the basic qualifications of a pastor do not vary, the gifts a man/woman needs to serve a church well may not be the same. Remember, a pastor is human. Amidst human frailties, pastors are God's gift to the church for the perfection of the saints. Scripture says he/she is worthy of double honor and should be esteemed highly for the very work's sake.

# Church Information Guide

## What a Prospective Pastor Should Know About Your Church

1. The prospective pastor should receive a copy of the Constitution and Bylaws.
2. He/she should receive a copy of the annual report and an update if considerable time has passed since the report was written.
3. The prospective pastor should be given a brief history of the church.
  - a. Its origin and development.
  - b. Factors which have affected growth and development.
  - c. List of former pastors and their length of service.
4. Statistics on membership and attendance.
  - a. Sunday School attendance.
  - b. Sunday attendance, a.m. (p.m. if applicable).
  - c. Midweek attendance.
  - d. Arrangements of service schedule if different from above.
  - e. Attendance increase or decrease in recent months and reasons for decrease.
  - f. Total number of members.
  - g. Number of active members.
5. Church Budget.
  - a. Income and expenditures.
  - b. Missions giving.
  - c. Debt and how it is financed.
6. Church Property.
  - a. Size and arrangement of building.
  - b. Parking – adequate or inadequate.
  - c. Property limitation and possibilities for future expansion.
  - d. Description of parsonage, if provided by the church.
7. Organization.
  - a. Church's attitude toward multiple staff (assistant or associate pastors) and how selected.
  - b. Church's relationship to the pastor and the church.
  - c. Secretarial assistance or other personnel, such as janitorial.
8. Attitudes of Church Members.
  - a. Interest in evangelism, missions, stewardship (tithe).

- b. Willingness to cooperate with other Assemblies of God churches in the area, the Network and the General Council.
  - c. Willingness to allow pastors to work with children, youth, and adult camp programs on Area or Regional levels.
  - d. Attitude of board to the Network and financial support.
  - e. Willingness to accept change.
  - f. What definitive hopes and objectives your congregation has for the next year; for the next five years.
9. What educational programs does the church have for adults?
10. Provision for the pastor.
- a. Indefinite or \_ year term.
  - b. Salary.
  - c. Policy for reviewing the pastor's salary.
  - d. Participation in Social Security.
  - e. Auxiliary retirement plan through Ministers Benefit Association.
  - f. Moving expenses paid by church.
  - g. Conference expenses:
    - (1) Network (annual)
    - (2) General Council (biennial)
    - (3) Other conferences/events
  - g. Provision of a private study or office for the pastor.
  - h. Policy on parsonage expenses or details of housing allowance.
  - i. Time allowed for secular work.
  - j. Policy for financial remuneration for evangelists, missionaries, and pulpit guests.
  - k. Policy for time off during weekly schedule.
  - l. Vacation policy.

These items are **only** suggestions and are **not** intended to be exhaustive or mandatory. They are offered only as a guide that may help in your selection of a pastor.

The above information will be very helpful in enabling a prospective pastor to consider his/her own capabilities, the needs of the church, and the will of God. This information should be compiled and sent to the candidate prior to the interview.

## Sample Pastoral Election Questionnaire

1. Please tell us your experience in working with multiple church staff.
2. How do you feel about having other ministers (including former pastors of the church) as members of the congregation?
3. What has been your experience in working with church boards?
4. Please tell us about your specific gifts or abilities and how you would use them as senior pastor of (church name).
5. Would you (and your spouse and family) be comfortable living in a largely rural or suburban environment?
6. How do you feel about community involvement by the church and the senior pastor?
7. How do you feel about political and social action in the church?
8. What disciplines do you regularly practice for your own spiritual formation and growth?
9. As senior pastor of (church name) how would you stay accountable in your spiritual and personal life?
10. Who do you look to as a role model or mentor for pastoral ministry?
11. What has been your experience and what is your opinion about a Purpose-Driven church model of ministry?
12. Are you able to affirm the (church name) vision statement, core values and model of ministry?
13. Would you be comfortable in preaching at three different styles of Sunday morning services, if necessary? (traditional/contemporary/blended)
14. What is your opinion and experience with home groups?
15. In your view and experience, what are the keys to church growth?
16. What has been your experience in working with and managing a church budget of (\$\$\$)?
17. What is your view of continuing education and what have you done in the past five years to further your growth as a minister?
18. What is your priority and view of missions?
19. Please tell us your attitude toward seeker-sensitive services and how you might balance that with times of prayer and altar calls or invitations in services?
20. Is your marriage strong and does your spouse fully support your calling?
21. How do you see your spouse being involved in the daily life of the church? Does your spouse have special gifts and abilities that help you in ministry?
22. Are you personally in debt (past due bills or tax issues) or having financial struggles we should be aware of? Have you ever filed bankruptcy?
23. Are you a tither and could you substantiate your tithing record if asked to do so?
24. Do you personally support missions on a regular monthly basis?

# Sample Letters to Non-Selected Candidates

## Letter A

Dear Rev. \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for your interest in being considered as a candidate for senior pastor of our church. We will prayerfully review your resume, along with others we have received.

We will contact you should our Pastoral Selection Committee desire to meet with you.

Sincerely,

Pastoral Selection Committee  
(Church Name)

## Letter B

Dear Rev. \_\_\_\_\_:

You will recall that we were recently in touch with you concerning your interest in our need for a senior pastor. You were one of a number of ministers whose qualifications and giftings were carefully and prayerfully reviewed in our selection process.

We are now focusing our attention on a few selected candidates whose qualifications and experience seem to fit our need.

Once again, thank you for submitting your resume to us. Your interest in our church is appreciated, and we wish you God's leading and blessing as you seek where He would have you serve.

Sincerely,

Pastoral Selection Committee  
(Church Name)



## Sample Notification to Newly Elected Pastor

Dear Rev. \_\_\_\_\_:

On behalf of \_\_\_\_\_ (church name) \_\_\_\_\_, I am delighted to extend to you an official invitation to become our senior pastor. The vote of the congregation was overwhelmingly positive. We believe God has given us direction, and we look forward to your ministry with us under God's blessing.

Our compensation offer is as follows:

Salary:

Housing allowance:

Car allowance:

Book allowance:

Study leave annually:

Vacation: Four weeks per year not including conventions, seminars, etc. We encourage you to use your vacation annually, as it does not accrue from year to year.

Medical/Dental: Fully paid for the entire family.

Life insurance:

Sick leave:

Retirement: The church will deposit 5% of your base salary monthly into MBA for your retirement.

It is normal practice for a minister to receive honorariums for weddings, funerals, etc. Such income is in addition to your salary. Pulpit supply will be worked out with the board concerning your absences from the pulpit for vacations, outside preaching, and for fulfilling responsibilities of serving on Network committees.

Please let me know of questions you have on any of these points. Let me assure you of our sense of expectancy and excitement as we anticipate working together to win our community for Christ.

We look forward to your arrival.

(Church Secretary)

(Pulpit Committee Chairman)

## Sample Notification to the Network (Pastoral Position)

Alaska Ministry Network  
1048 W Int'l Airport Rd; Ste 101  
Anchorage, AK 99518

Dear Network Leader:

At a business meeting held (date), Rev. (name) was elected as pastor of (church name). His/her first Sunday will be (date).

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# **The New Pastor**

## **How to Welcome the New Pastor**

Now that the new pastor has been selected, someone should be appointed to see that he/she is welcomed to his/her new church and to the community. Meals could be provided while the pastor and family are moving in and getting settled. Some of the men could also help move heavy items, if needed.

The new pastor will feel an affirmation of his/her call as care is taken to make sure that he/she and his/her family are settled in their new home.

## **The Installation Service**

Many churches conduct an installation service for the incoming pastor. Setting aside time to formally recognize, inaugurate and celebrate a new pastor's ministry can be a very meaningful time for the pastor and congregation alike. The board and new pastor should select an appropriate date. Care should be taken to coordinate the date with the individual who will be conducting the installation service. If you desire the Superintendent or another Network Officer to conduct the installation, please contact the Network Office. You may desire to invite special guests from the community as well as relatives of the pastor and spouse.

## **Trust God for a Great Future**

With the coming of a new pastor, there will be changes. Some changes may be major, others minor, but be patient and allow God to lead the congregation forward in maturity and development.

Some members may react negatively to changes introduced by the new pastor, but the board should stand by the pastor and do everything possible to encourage goodwill.

# Pastoral Remuneration

Galatians 6:6 is a good passage for churches to remember as they deal with a pastor's compensation. "Let him who is taught the Word share all good things with him who teaches."

Pastors deal daily with matters affecting the spiritual well-being of the church. These are matters of spiritual life or death. While the pastors report organizationally to man, they are directly charged with responsibilities by our Lord. They are charged with being the spiritual overseers of the assembly. This involves 1) providing the spiritual food needed by the body, with its current needs, and 2) guiding and leading the body and its leadership in the direction needed for the church to meet its obligations to the Great Commission. The senior pastor is also responsible for administration of the church from a chief executive point of view. Following are guidelines to be used in considering a pastors compensation.

## Salary

The pastor is a professional person. The day of the clergy discount is over. The vast majority of our churches want to compensate their pastors fairly, and most feel that they provide a reasonable, living wage. However, we regularly consult with church boards in this regard and many are surprised to discover that they are paying their pastors well below national averages. Because it is sometimes challenging to find accurate information about pastoral compensation in a local church setting, and because of the emotions that sometimes play a role in this discussion, churches often neglect to deal with this issue. Objective information is available, however, and I would encourage your board or finance/budget committee to take a serious look at pastoral salaries in the coming year. There are 3 primary methods of coming to compensation figures:

### **METHOD 1: NATIONAL SALARY SURVEY**

There are a number of salary studies and surveys available to assist you in establishing appropriate salary levels. Here are some survey options to consider:

#### **Church Law and Tax | [www.churchlawandtax.com](http://www.churchlawandtax.com)**

We highly recommend purchasing the yearly publication put out called *Compensation Handbook for Church Staff*. Richard Hammar, the legal counsel for the General Council of the Assemblies of God, serves as an editor of this study. It provides tables of data, breaking down pastoral compensation by denomination, staff position, educational level, years of experience, size of congregation, region, size of community, or church income. Click on the bookstore link located on the homepage.

#### **National Association of Church Business Administrators | [www.nacba.net](http://www.nacba.net)**

Another more expensive survey is the *National Church Staff Compensation Survey* for \$150 which can be accessed through the link on the NACBA website or directly at [www.nacba.enetrix.com](http://www.nacba.enetrix.com). Note: There is a NACBA Member

Registration and a Non-NACBA Member Registration option to access the Survey. On the homepage go to the *Register* tab and select the appropriate option for your church. Once you have established your account you will be able to purchase a report subscription and access the report. If you have a membership with NACBA, membership pricing applies. If you are not an NACBA member, standard Salary Survey pricing applies. A price list is located under the *Purchase Info* tab.

### **Leadership Network | [www.leadnet.org](http://www.leadnet.org)**

Leadership Network also does a free survey every couple years targeting larger churches from 800 – 2,000 in attendance. You will notice that this survey uses the term "teaching pastor" as it is a role usually only found in larger churches right now. Do a search for "salary survey." Select the resource: *Salary and Economic Outlook*.

### **METHOD 2: COMPARATIVE JOBS IN COMMUNITY**

Another method is examining school board salary scales and what a school administrator is paid in the local community. Median income figures for the community are usually available through local government such as the Chamber of Commerce. It is nice to have them do all of the work for you as far as cost of living, benchmarks, etc. Many churches have found it useful to seek information about the salary levels of those who bring to their professions a comparable educational background. We recommend that a pastor should be paid comparable to a local school principle and a larger/regional church pastor should be paid similar to the superintendent of schools in the district. Always remember to consider other substantial compensation that might not be included in the actual salary such as health insurance, vacation pay, and retirement benefits.

### **METHOD 3: PERCENTAGE OF BUDGET**

Another method used is measuring what the total compensation of the staff is to the overall budget. Most churches stay under 50% of total budget for staff.

The foregoing are simply suggestions. Many other factors enter into salary planning. For example, experience (years of service) in the ministry is a factor; performance (track record) in other assignments should be considered, as well as special gifts or talents that are unique to the ministry (music, leadership, etc.). Some consideration should be given to the salary level of the candidate in his/her former assignment. Many variables are involved and must be negotiated in an atmosphere of openness and honesty. Above all, do not leave questions of salary or compensation unresolved. Such indecision will only lead to difficulty later.

A church should remember that a pastor incurs certain legitimate expenses in fulfilling his/her service responsibility to God and the church. These expenses should not be considered part of the salary but should be accurately reflected in the format of the budget.

## **Housing and Utility Allowance**

If a parsonage and utility expenses are provided, it is important that the house be kept in good repair and that the church report the actual rental value to a retirement plan for the purpose of determining pension premiums. If a housing allowance is provided, it must be adequate for meeting the cost of family housing in the community. The housing allowance is considered excludable income under present IRS ruling when the pastor reports income for tax purposes.

Writes Lyle Schaller, "The church-owned parsonage is an arrangement that exists primarily as a convenience to the congregation, not the pastor. This is why the minister does not have to pay federal income tax on the value of his/her housing. Traditionally, the arrangement has been the result of the congregation's desire to have a resident minister."

More and more in urban areas especially, pastors are choosing a housing allowance and are owning their own homes because of a number of benefits they feel strongly about:

1. Independence – This is true even when the pastor uses the housing allowance to rent a house.
2. Security – The pastor and spouse feel they are making an investment in their financial future by building equity in a home.
3. Stability – Pastors tend to sink their roots into their community when they own a home there. They can be seen as and function as taxpaying homeowners in that community.

## **BUSINESS EXPENSES**

### **Auto Expense**

This is clearly an operating cost of the church and in no way should be considered part of the salary. Some churches lease a car, others pay mileage, and many churches pay a flat amount to cover transportation expenses.

### **Conference and Meetings**

Sending the pastor to these events is part of the church's investment in the relational life of the Assemblies of God and is clearly a part of ministerial work. Travel costs, lodging, per diem food allowances, and registration fees should be budgeted. Some churches prefer to pay actual costs. When a conference is some distance away, the cost of air travel should be allowed regardless of the mode of travel the pastor elects to use.

## **Continuing Educational Expenses**

Continuing education should be budgeted as a yearly operating expense item. The value to the church is incalculable. Continuing education can broaden horizons, stimulate thinking, and enable pastors to expand and increase their ministerial skills and maintain job satisfaction.

## **Hospitality Allowance**

Most pastors spend out-of-pocket money entertaining prospective members, guest speakers, and others. To make provision in the budget for these situations indicates that the church takes note of this expense and is grateful for the ministry.

## **FRINGE BENEFITS**

### **Group Health Insurance**

This is a must for the minister and his/her family. It is important to review the policy carefully to ensure that it provides for such benefits as life insurance, accidental death and dismemberment, long-term disability income, educational benefits for children (at the death of the minister), hospitalization costs, surgical, maternity, in-hospital doctors' calls, and major medical. **Due to rapidly changing laws concerning health care premiums, you should consult the Network Office to make sure the health care arrangement is following the appropriate laws.**

### **Retirement Plan**

Two good retirement programs are the Ministers Benefit Association, with headquarters in Springfield, Missouri, and Church Extension Plan (CEP), headquartered in Salem, Oregon. If a pastor selects his/her own plan, the church should pay the premiums directly.

Salary, business expenses, and fringe benefits must be seen as a necessary part of the ongoing ministry and missions of the church.

# Supporting an Effective Ministry Worksheet

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	This Year	Proposed for Next Year
	20_____	20_____
<b>A. Basic Compensation</b>		
Salary	\$ _____	\$ _____
Housing Provision	\$ _____	\$ _____
Utilities	\$ _____	\$ _____
<b>Compensation:</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>
<b>B. Ministry-related Expenses</b>		
Automobile	\$ _____	\$ _____
Conventions & Seminars	\$ _____	\$ _____
Continuing Education	\$ _____	\$ _____
Hospitality	\$ _____	\$ _____
Memberships	\$ _____	\$ _____
Books & Periodicals	\$ _____	\$ _____
<b>Expenses:</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>
<b>C. Fringe Benefits</b>		
Hospital/Medical Insurance	\$ _____	\$ _____
Life Insurance	\$ _____	\$ _____
Disability Insurance	\$ _____	\$ _____
Dental Insurance	\$ _____	\$ _____
Social Security Tax Offset	\$ _____	\$ _____
Retirement Program	\$ _____	\$ _____
<b>Benefits:</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>



**ALASKA MINISTRY NETWORK OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD, INC.**  
*ESTIMATED HOUSING EXPENSES*

This agreement is valid  
 effective the approved date indicated below  
 until further action by the governing body

Minister's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Internal Revenue Service Regulation 1.107.1 (c) provides:

Legal deductions for ministers of the gospel as a housing allowance include the following:

1. Rent of home
2. Costs of expenses directly related to providing a home

Federal law requires that ministers who deduct a housing allowance submit an estimate of expected expenses to their "employer," who must record in their official minutes that this portion of the minister's salary is designated (in advance) as housing allowance and not subject to federal income taxes. This amount, however, is subject to self-employment tax. Please complete this form and return it to your employer. Below are some guidelines for determining your employer:

- If you are pastor of a **General Council or Ministry Network Affiliated church**, submit your completed form to **your official church board**.
- If you are pastor of a **Developing Assembly** submit your completed form to the Alaska Network Office.
- If you are **US Missions appointed**, submit the form you receive from **back to them**.
- If you are approved as an **Alaska Network Special Ministries**, submit your form to **Alaska Network Office**.
- If you are **incorporated**, submit your form to **your corporation board**.
- **All others** must submit your form to the **agency through which you receive ministerial income**.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact our office. Please keep a duplicate copy of this form for your records, as you must be able to justify these figures by submitting a report of actual housing expenses at the end of the calendar year.

Estimate the anticipated costs you will incur for the next calendar year for the following expenses:

RENT OF HOME.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

INSTALLMENT PAYMENTS ON LOANS/PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST . \$ \_\_\_\_\_

FURNISHINGS PURCHASED OR MONTHLY PAYMENTS .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

REPAIRS/IMPROVEMENTS .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

UTILITIES CONNECTED WITH THE HOME  
 (gas, water, sewer, electricity, telephone) .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

HOME INSURANCE.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

REAL ESTATE TAXES .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER EXPENSES OF A HOME OTHER THAN FOOD OR SERVANT  
 (paid yard maintenance, trash pickup, etc.) .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE REQUESTED  
 BEGINNING JANUARY 1, \_\_\_\_\_ IS:.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

MINISTER'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED BY (SIGNATURE): \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Place of the Pastor

**“...you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God . . .” (I Timothy 3:15, KJV).**

In the Assemblies of God, we believe in a God-called ministry. One thing that strong churches have in common is that their congregations recognize the unique calling of the pastor.

## **Pastors are God’s Gift to the Church**

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian church, he said in chapter 4:10, “...He ascended up on high and gave gifts unto men.” Among these gifts he lists the pastor. These gifts are sometimes referred to as “ascension gifts.” They are based upon His victory over Satan, sin, and the grave. As the victorious conqueror over the enemy, He has the right to dispense these remarkable gifts. God calls pastors, and God gives them or assigns them to His church. It is a high and holy calling.

## **Pastors are Sent on a Divine Mission**

The New Testament church moves on the feet of those who, “...preach the Gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good thing.” (Romans 10:15, KJV). Paul asked, “How then shall they call upon Him Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” Paul is referring to the proclamation of the Word of God recorded in the Scripture and centered in the redemptive work of Christ. It is an invitation to “whosoever” to repent, believe, and to obey the Gospel.

Preaching is God’s way of communicating the Gospel of hope to an unbelieving world and for the strengthening of the faith of those who have found refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ. Amazing as it may seem, the will and the work of God are made known to us through human personality. In God’s economy, a preacher is essential to the delivery of the message of salvation. “. . . It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (I Corinthians 1:21, KJV).

Esteem will be revealed by:

1. *Attendance.* If God has provided him/her to preach to you, there is a responsibility for you to be present to hear the Word he/she dispenses.
2. *Cooperation.* Let it be said of your pastor that he/she is laboring among a chosen group whose hearts God has touched and who are reaching out to minister to others also.
3. *By treating him/her always with kindness and respect.* In your families, in your church business meetings, and in your relationship with others, give attention to your words and show love and kindness. Do not circulate or receive negative reports about him/her. The purest of characters have not escaped reproach and slander.

4. *Proper financial support.* Scripture teaches that you should be generous with the man/woman of God (I Cor. 9:9, I Tim. 5:18).
5. *Constant prayer and supplication for him/her.* Paul said, “Brethren pray for us.” (I Thess. 5:25, II Thess. 3:15, Hebrews 13:18, KJV). Prayer for your pastor is in order. Pray that he/she may be filled with all the fullness of God, for personal spiritual prosperity, boldness, the grace of Jesus, and extended success.

Pastors and churches benefit when the congregation recognizes the pastor’s rightful place. Much of your improvement, instruction, and comfort as a Christian depend on your minister. Your blessing increases the more your minister is blessed. The more efficient he/she becomes, the more you reap the benefits.

God places no predetermined limits upon the pastor’s tenure with your church. It could well be for life. At the very least, the results of his/her ministry with you are for eternity! One day he/she will give his/her report before the Lord for the ministry among you (Hebrews 13:17). Your relationship with your pastor needs to be with eternity’s values in view.

When you recognize the pastor’s special place in your life and in your church spiritual dynamics work to provide God’s blessing to all who hear his/her words.

### **Pastors Have a Solemn Relationship with the Church**

The pastor’s relationship with the church is a spiritual one which carries clearly defined responsibilities. By taking heed to the Scriptures, the pastor cannot mistake his/her duties or the way he/she is to carry them out. The pastor is over the church that he/she labors in; he/she is the under-shepherd who is to watch over the flock and feed them; he/she is to rule over the church and yet do so as a servant; he/she is to “. . . reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (II Timothy 4:2, KJV); and he/she labors earnestly that he/she may present every man or woman perfect in Christ Jesus.

### **Pastors Are to Be Held in Esteem**

In the Assemblies of God, the congregation participates in the pastoral selection process. You approve his/her ministry and prayerfully elect him/her to the high and dignified office of pastor over you. Therefore, you need to maintain a Scriptural attitude toward him/her and his/her God-given position.

You are to “esteem” him/her; to regard him/her of great worth: “And we beseech you brethren to know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves” (I Thess. 5:12, 13, KJV). He/she watches over your spiritual health; he/she helps you understand your relationship to God; he/she warns you of dangers; he/she teaches you how to be strong and leads you in worship; he/she stands by you from the cradle to the grave or from your conversion until God takes you home. He/she is your guide to see you safely across the sea of life and helps you enter your eternal home. Because of this, you are to esteem him/her highly—yes, even higher than you esteem others of God’s people. Conduct

that is influenced by esteem in love will be evident, and right and proper attitudes will be maintained as a result. Others will have no question as to how you relate to this gift that God has given you and the church.

## **The Classroom of Ministry Transition**

Two ministers attending a conference were standing in the hallway engaged in an obviously intense conversation. One of them exclaimed, "It's just that in all of my formal training we simply never talked about it." They were not debating doctrine nor were they discussing church polity. Rather, they were involved in the same conversation that hundreds of ministers have every month with trusted confidants. One of them was facing a ministry transition with all of its attendant joys and challenges.

Every year, thousands of ministers from all denominations come face-to-face with a ministry transition. Some of these changes come as a result of the minister's own choosing. A redirection in ministry focus or a planned retirement leads the list of reasons for ministry transition. Some ministers will transition for reasons that are not of their choosing. Each month, hundreds of ministers' face forced terminations. Twenty percent of them will never return to a ministry career again. Properly facing and dealing with a transition can spell the difference between future success or failure.

In a musical composition, a transition is a passage connecting two sections or themes. It often takes the form of a modulation. Though brief, the modulation becomes the bridge between what has been heard before and what will be heard after. A poorly written or performed transition can ruin the whole musical selection. The average minister faces numerous transitions during the course of a ministerial career.

How we face transition not only says a great deal about the kind of people we are, but it serves as a passage between the past and the future. Transitions are important to the overall composition of our ministry.

### **Allow Time to Grieve**

As a minister, you soon learn that the transitions will be accompanied by a sense of grief. Grief is the human response to loss. It happens whether you are leaving under positive or negative circumstances. You, your family, and the church or ministry family you leave behind will experience grief. When leaving a positive situation, you may grieve over losing security, leaving warm friendships, and being unable to fulfill ministry goals and vision. When leaving a negative situation, you still grieve. If nothing else, you grieve over what might have been. Ministers and congregations must expect and allow time for the grieving process.

### **Expect a Certain Amount of Rejection**

For some congregation or ministry members, your announcement to transition to another ministry is interpreted as a form of rejection. This is especially true for people who have dealt with rejection throughout their lifetime. As a spiritual leader, you may have become one of the few constant and trustworthy people in their lives. To them, your resignation is nothing short of abandonment. Unfortunately, a common reaction is to reject you in turn. It hurts at the time, but with your reassurance and uninterrupted love, the rejection usually turns to acceptance once again.

## **Be Sensitive to the Needs of Your Spouse and Children**

As a conscientious minister, you have the task of displaying extra sensitivity to the security needs of your spouse and family during a time of transition. One way to help your family members is to include them in the discussion and decision-making process leading up to a transition.

## **Attempt to Take Extended Time Off Between Posts**

A transition affords an opportunity that may not be available at any other time in the course of your ministerial career. How often do you have the chance to enjoy an extended time away from the demands of ministry? This is especially true during the buffer provided by a transition when you are between posts. You have left the old responsibilities behind and have yet to assume the full burden and schedule of a new post. If circumstances allow, plan extra time off for rest, relaxation, and renewal. Transition may afford you the only sabbatical you will ever see in your ministry.

## **Assume the Posture of a Learner**

One of the traits I have observed and admired most often in effective leaders is the ability to lead and teach others while still maintaining a learner's posture. This posture allows you to make adaptations that are inevitably necessary during transition to new surroundings. Although you may be accustomed to being in command, a learner's posture enables you to submit to the authority of others when called upon to do so. Transition has its own way of calling upon your willingness to learn, to submit, and to adapt to new relationships and surroundings. Only if you are committed to a lifetime of learning will you achieve all God has in store for you. Ernest Hemingway expressed it this way: "There are some things which cannot be learned quickly, and time, which is all we have, must be paid heavily for their acquiring."

## **Stretch Your Professional and Ministry Boundaries**

As long as transition urges you toward the posture of a learner, use the opportunity it affords to be innovative, creative, and even daring. Starting fresh in a new role in a different place can provide just the freedom you need to breathe new life into a stagnant ministry.

## **Speak Well of Your Predecessor and Your Successor**

You may accept a new role only to be immediately challenged by your congregation's fond recollections of your predecessor. It is at this point in transition that you must do everything possible to speak well of those who came before you. To tear down a predecessor, especially one that was well liked, will hardly endear you as the new leader to a church body already struggling with the grief of their own loss. Blessing a former leader is a key to your success as the new leader. Equally important is the assignment given you if you are leaving a ministry post soon to be replaced by your successor. Your pledge must be to do and say all you can to ensure the future success of the new leader.

## **Leave the House in Order**

As a conscientious leader, you should do everything within your power to leave a church or ministry in good order for your successor. A minister recently reported that he went to a new church and discovered numerous routine bills unpaid and past due. It was not for lack of funds, because the checking balance was adequate. Rather, the oversight was due to a conscious decision on the part of the predecessor to leave it for the next guy. A responsible steward will make sure the house is in order before leaving. A suggestion would be to assemble a transition notebook for the board and interim leadership. The notebook should contain up-to-date information on finances, church leadership, membership, policies, philosophy statements, and other pertinent facts about the history and present ministry of the church.

Transition is also a great time to clean the slate spiritually. Asking for and extending forgiveness for unfulfilled expectations and offenses affords cleansing for both the minister and the church body. During the transition, you can lay down excess baggage that may otherwise be carried into the future.

## **Properly Prepare the Leaders to be Left Behind**

Another important aspect of leaving your house in order is preparing church leadership to adequately deal with transition after you are gone. In some cases, where there is antagonism toward a departing minister, this will not be possible. However, in many cases, no one is better suited than you to direct and prepare staff, board members, and other church leadership for transition. The critical role of church leaders is magnified during transition. While some staff members and boards unwisely spurn input from a departing minister, many recognize and welcome it. Avoid abdicating your leadership role prematurely by exerting your leadership right up to the point of walking out the door. This includes properly preparing and training leaders who will handle matters in your absence.

## **Avoid Transplanting the Past Without Proper Pruning**

A successful minister left a long-term ministry to fill a new role elsewhere. Immediately, he faced challenges. Members of the church and even other staff associates seemed to sense a general lack of enthusiasm and freshness. The problem only seemed to worsen, and the new minister was sensitive to being questioned about it. He had attempted to transplant the past without proper pruning and had failed. He ultimately left. Both he and the church were in turmoil. While principles remain constant, methods and approaches must be adapted to fit the new environment.

A small child was instructed to put on different clothes if he was going to go outside to play. He muttered to himself all the way up the stairs until his mother asked him if this was going to be a problem. The boy answered and said, "I don't mind wearin' different clothes. It's the changin' I don't like." The classroom of transition can be rigorous, yet there are few learning environments more profitable. May God give us strength and resolve to be responsible agents of change during transitions in our lives and ministries.