Pastors In Transition

Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

These handouts are also available at: http://vitality.arumc.org/pastoral-transition-resources/

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- ARUMC Parsonage Transition Checklist (Formerly called the Parsonage Damage Report, Revised 2016)
- Lewis Center: 50 Ways to Welcome your New Pastor
- Lewis Center: 50 Ways to Improve Pastoral Transitions
- Arkansas Conference Pastoral Transition Covenant (2014 ARUMC Clergy Session)
- It’s Biblical: Women In Ministry by Dr. Michael Roberts (2001 It’s Biblical Series)
- Lewis Center: Suggestions for Churches with a Clergywoman
- Lewis Center: Suggestions for Churches with a Young Pastor
- Lewis Center: Suggestions for Churches with a Single Pastor

DISCOVER MORE RESOURCES AT:

vitality.arumc.org
Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples, equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.
Checklist for “Passing the Baton”
Pastors in Transition Workshop

The following information should be included in the transition packet that the outgoing pastor gives to the incoming pastor. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but will help you begin to gather the basics that will help the new pastor during the transition.¹

CONGREGATIONAL DOCUMENTS

- Copy of the church’s vision/mission statement
- Most recent minutes of all-church conferences or meetings
- Church directory, annotated with information about relationships, pastoral care needs, and potential leaders
- Church email list
- Organizational chart
- List of church lay leaders and committee members and contact information
- Last Year’s Charge Conference Report
- Last Year’s Annual End of Year Statistical Report
- Congregational Profile completed by SPRC last August/January
- Church history statement

Budget & Financials:
- Current and last two years of budget reports
- Latest month’s financial statement
- Last three church newsletters
- Outstanding large debts
- Recent capital campaign materials

Worship Life:
- Recent bulletins for each worship service
- Bulletins for most recent Christmas Eve and Easter services, as well as other special services that are routinely part of the church’s life •

Church policies:
- Weddings
- Funerals
- Building use
- Employee Handbook / Staff Personnel Policy (see staffing section below)
- Financial Controls Policy/Spending Restrictions

Pastoral Care:
- List of those in nursing homes or homebound
- List of those struggling with long-term illness, grief, etc.

Copies of any ministry or church brochures currently in use

¹ This list and the recommended questions are adapted from the excellent resource found in the appendix of Your Best Move: Effective Leadership Transition for the Local Church by Robert Kaylor, Asbury Seedbed Publishing.
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STAFFING DOCUMENTS
- Staff listing, Contact Information
- Staff Organizational Chart (supervisory/reporting relationships)
- Staff Salary Sheet
- Employee Handbook / Staff Personnel Policy
- Job Descriptions
- Staff ministry area briefings: 1-2 page descriptions created by staff members
  - Short Informal Description & History of Position
  - Hours/Days Scheduled Weekly
  - Current Goals
  - What do you enjoy most about your ministry?
  - What open projects are you currently working on that will still be in progress when new pastor arrives?
- Recent staff meeting agendas

SCHEDULE
- Scheduled weddings in July or beyond
- Scheduled Special Events
- Scheduled Committee Meetings in July-August
- Set dates for meetings that run every month/quarter
- VBS (Day or Evening?)

OTHER ITEMS
- Church keys
- Passwords to church website, email, social media, digital services and accounts

PARSONAGE
- Keys
- Manuals for all appliances
- Names and phone numbers of plumbers, electricians, etc. that the church has approved
- Contact information for the parsonage committee chair (or trustee contact)
- Policies or Expectations relating to the parsonage (improvements, repairs, etc.)
- Trash service days
- Lawn care expectations
- Maintenance Schedule: HVAC contract, Pest Control, etc.
- Significant parsonage information: recurrent flooding, basement or HVAC issues, etc.
- Parsonage Property Owners Association information
- If the new parsonage family has school-age children, provide copies of a letter on church letterhead stating the address of the church, the address of the parsonage, and the name of the new pastor. This will be needed for as proof of residence in the school district. If the new pastor has small children and the church has a daycare, provide information about registration and any clergy discounts.
“Passing the Baton” Meeting
Pastors in Transition Workshop

These questions are designed for a “passing the baton” handoff meeting between the incoming and outgoing pastor. They may be in writing, or included as part of the handoff meeting and church/parsonage tour. If needed, the SPRC Chair and Lay leader may need to be included in this or a similar meeting.²

ORGANIZATION
1. Are any staff positions currently vacant?
2. Are any staff changes needed or expected?
3. Describe any organizational process or structure that is unique to this congregation.
4. What agencies or resources are available for those who may call with needs for emergency food, clothing, shelter, or assistance?
5. Is there a ministerial association in the community?
6. Provide contact information.

FINANCIAL
1. What is the normal stewardship process at this church?
2. Who is in charge of promoting stewardship in the church?
3. What is the number of pledging and non-pledging households?
4. What is the average financial contribution of each member family to the church?
5. What are the purchasing restrictions and policies for pastor/staff/committees?
6. What is the pastor’s historical role in stewardship campaigns?
7. Does the church have a permanent endowment fund? What is it used for and how is it funded?
8. Are there any upcoming significant financial issues or significant facility needs?

TECHNOLOGY
1. Describe the church’s computer. Is it wireless?
2. Is the pastor provided with a computer? What kind?
3. Does the church communicate with the congregation primarily by email?
4. Does the church have a web page and, if so, who maintains it?
5. What are the appropriate passwords the pastor needs to know?
6. How will the pastor’s email be set up?
7. Who knows about the church’s membership and financial software?

COMMUNICATIONS
1. What is the church’s primary method of communication with its members?
2. What percentage of the church membership uses electronic communication (email, text, internet, etc.)?

² This resource adapted from the excellent appendix found in Your Best Move: Effective Leadership Transition for the Local Church by Robert Kaylor, Asbury Seedbed Publishing.
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3. How often does the church newsletter come out? How is it distributed? What does the pastor need to prepare for the newsletter? What are the deadlines?
4. How does the church communicate with the community? What kind of outside advertising does the church do?

WORSHIP
1. Who is historically involved in planning weekly worship?
2. What are the times of all the worship services?
3. Are any new services being planned?
4. What is the role of clergy and laity at each service?
5. What is the average worship attendance at all services? Is it increasing or decreasing? Why?
6. What is the role of children and youth in worship? Is there children’s worship during the main worship services? Is there a children’s message in the service? Who does the children’s message?
7. What styles of worship are currently being offered?
8. How is the bulletin prepared? Who is involved? What is the timeline for completion of the bulletin each week?
9. How does the church conduct the sacraments? When is communion offered and by what means?
10. Are there ecumenical community worship events? When?

PASTORAL CARE
1. What families are currently experiencing loss, illness, or special needs?
2. Who are the homebound members? Is there a regular ministry in place for them?

BUILDING
1. How are building items and maintenance handled? Who orders supplies?
2. Is there a custodian? Contract or staff? What are his/her hours?
3. What community groups regularly use the building? When?

COMMUNITY / NEIGHBORHOOD COTTAGE MEETINGS
1. What is the status for planned cottage meetings or other gatherings for the intentional forming of relationships?
2. Who are the point people on SPRC (or other group) gathering the meetings and what is their contact information?

MISSION FIELD ENGAGEMENT
1. Are there any significant church controversies?
2. Are there any significant community/neighborhood controversies? How is the church currently involved or not involved?
3. How would you describe the congregational culture and “DNA”:
   a. Understanding of and relationship to the mission field
   b. How the congregation makes decisions
   c. Use of the church facility by members and the community
   d. Unique ministry niche or narrative in the community
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SPRC Annual Timeline 2018-2019

Blessings in your ministry of leadership, administrative oversight, and governance! The Staff (or Pastor) Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) has both leadership and management functions in the congregation. Leadership is the role of “keeping an eye on the big picture.” Even in the midst of meetings or crises, the SPRC members must never forget they are part of the body of Christ, and they must always be aware of the mission of God’s Church. Management is the role of tending to daily activities so that details are taken care of and strategies are implemented. (UMC Guidelines, Abingdon Press)

This Annual Timeline is based on the conference year and was created by the Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality, in consultation with the Bishop and Cabinet, to help SPR Committees and pastors plan monthly meetings. The word ‘relations’ in the title of the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee is meaningful because the primary work of the SPRC is relational. The committee’s communications should be as much about listening as talking, as in any healthy relationship.

Every month in the SPRC Annual Timeline has up to three categories:

- First are suggested monthly meeting emphases, offered to provide a framework for discussion. Included in several of the meeting emphases is a Suggested Mission Field Accountability Conversation. This agenda item offers the SPRC an opportunity to discuss a particular aspect of your congregation’s engagement with your community mission field.
- Second, some months in the timeline include a section for new appointments. Experience has shown that congregational and pastoral intentionality in the welcoming and first several months makes a huge difference in the fruitfulness of a new pastor.
- Third, reminders are included so that the SPRC can stay on track to submit required forms. Conference forms are a primary tool for the appointive process. Your clarity, self-awareness, and feedback are vital to ensuring appropriate pastoral leadership for your community’s mission field and congregation.

July

- **Monthly SPRC Meeting Emphasis:**
  - Getting to know each other (New Appointments)
  - Complete Clergy Assessments and SPRC Questionnaire (Sent out July 1 for Continuing Appointments)
  - Suggested Mission Field Accountability Conversation: Discuss the pastor’s and church’s plans for guest follow-up and evangelism opportunities for the Back-To-School season

- **New Appointment Recommendations:**
  - Hold a welcome celebration for new pastor; Churches are encouraged to share a pastoral transition with wider community and local media as an evangelism opportunity
  - Begin a process of intentional relationship building and orientation through Cottage Meetings or Listening Sessions with congregation members
  - This year’s appointment letter asks that new pastors and a team of laity attend the Growing Disciples Summit on August 25 at St James UMC in Little Rock so that they are equipped to create an intentional discipleship system or pathway. SPRCs are encouraged to assist the pastor in building a team to attend the Summit

- **Reminders:**
  - New appointments take effect July 1 and incoming pastor compensation forms are due in advance
  - Clergy Assessments, SPRC Questionnaire, and Clergy Profiles are due August 11
August

- **Monthly SPRC Meeting Emphasis:**
  - Provide immediate feedback with pastor and discuss mutual expectations
  - Complete and turn in Clergy Assessments and SPRC Questionnaire (Continuing Appointments)

- **New Appointment Recommendations:**
  - Cottage Meetings or Listening Sessions continue
  - Conversation with DS in mid-August for those in new appointments
  - Assist the new pastor with relationship-building with local community leaders and groups

- **Reminders:**
  - Clergy Assessments, SPRC Questionnaire, and Clergy Profiles due August 11
  - The Growing Disciples Summit is Saturday, August 25, at St James UMC in Little Rock
  - Pastoral Compensation Forms for 2019 will need to be approved by your SPRC and your Board in advance of the District-wide Charge Conferences.
  - Charge Conferences will be held as District-wide gatherings:

September

- **Monthly SPRC Meeting Emphasis:**
  - Pastor and SPRC discuss experience of listening sessions/cottage gatherings (New Appointments)
  - Suggested Mission Field Accountability Conversation: Discuss the pastor’s next steps for leading the congregation in the creation of an intentional discipleship system, based on the equipping that occurred at Annual Conference and the Growing Disciples Summit.

- **New Appointment Recommendations:**
  - Continue assisting the new pastor with relationship-building with local community leaders and groups

- **Reminders:**
  - Charge Conferences will be held as District-wide gatherings
  - Be sure your entire Charge Conference packet is complete, voted on by your Board, and submitted to your district office by your district’s due date (one month before your District Charge Conference)

October

- **Monthly SPRC Meeting Emphasis:**
  - Approve any changes to the church’s personnel/employee policies. SPRC resources and resource recommendations are available at [http://vitality.arumc.org/sprc-tool-kit/](http://vitality.arumc.org/sprc-tool-kit/).
  - Begin setting compensation plans for lay staff for the 2019 budget year

November

- **Monthly SPRC Meeting Emphasis:**
  - Use the Assessment Form submitted in August to follow-up on any goals or issues (Returning pastor)
  - Suggested Mission Field Accountability Conversation: Discuss the pastor’s and church’s plans for community evangelism, guest engagement, and guest follow-up during Advent and Christmas.

- **Reminder:**
  - Clergy Consultation Forms are due December 15. They will be mailed to pastors and Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (SPR) Chairs on November 1.
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December
• Monthly SPRC Meeting Emphasis:
  ○ Complete and return by December 15 SPRC & Pastor Consultation Forms concerning the 2019-2020 pastoral appointment.
  ○ Plan orientation and onboarding of new SPRC members and celebrate the ministry of those rotating off the SPRC. SPRC resources are available at http://vitality.arumc.org/sprc-tool-kit/.
• Reminder:
  ○ Clergy Consultation Forms are due December 15.

January
• Monthly SPRC Meeting Emphasis:
  ○ Discuss congregational and pastoral leadership goals for the new year
  ○ Welcome and onboarding for new SPRC members.
  ○ Suggested Mission Field Accountability Conversation: Discuss the pastor’s and church’s plans for community evangelism, guest engagement, and guest follow-up during Lent and Easter.

February
• Monthly SPRC Meeting Emphasis:
  ○ Discussion of the year-end statistics submitted to the Annual Conference
  ○ Suggested Mission Field Accountability Conversation: Discuss the pastor’s progress in leading the congregation in the creation of an intentional discipleship system, based on the equipping that occurred at Annual Conference and the Growing Disciples Summit.
  ○ Prepare process for lay staff evaluations. SPRC recommended resources are available at vitality.arumc.org/sprc-tool-kit/.

March
• Monthly SPRC Meeting Emphasis:
  ○ Suggested Mission Field Accountability Conversation: Conversation about what we’ve learned about our Mission Field and our ministry in and with it
  ○ Report and discuss lay staff evaluations

April
• Monthly SPRC Meeting Emphasis:
  ○ Discuss the pastor’s and church’s progress on goals and expectations, using the pastoral appointment letter, previous SPRC assessment and consultation forms, and quarterly Vital Signs statistics as conversation tools. Discuss next steps for achieving goals.
• New Appointment Recommendations:
  ○ If your church will be experiencing a pastoral change in July, SPRC should begin process of saying “goodbye” and “hello” well.
  ○ Transition resources are available at vitality.arumc.org/pastoral-transition-resources
May

- **Monthly SPRC Meeting Emphasis:**
  - Suggested Mission Field Accountability Conversations: Discuss the pastor’s and church’s plans for engaging guests during summer.
  - Continue discussion from April meeting concerning goals, strategies, and continued feedback.
- **New Appointment Recommendations:**
  - If your church will be experiencing a pastoral change in July, the SPRC should prepare and plan for a goodbye celebration for current pastor and make arrangements (in consultation with the incoming pastor) for an intentional welcome and orientation of the new pastor with the church and community.
  - Full-time pastors receiving a new appointment will attend the Pastors in Transition Workshop
- **Reminder:**
  - Clergy receiving new appointments will need to submit complete and signed compensation forms to the District Office

June

- **Monthly SPRC Meeting Emphasis:**
  - Celebrate the pastoral leadership appointment or re-appointment
  - Study quarterly Vital Signs statistics and discuss goals
- **Reminder:**
  - Annual Conference meets

July

- **Monthly SPRC Meeting Emphasis:**
  - Getting to know each other (New Appointments)
  - Complete Clergy Assessments and Congregation Profile (Continuing Appointments)
  - Suggested Mission Field Accountability Conversation: Discuss the pastor’s and church’s plans for guest follow-up and evangelism opportunities for the Back-To-School season
- **Reminders:**
  - New appointments take effect July 1 and incoming pastor compensation forms are due in advance
  - Clergy Assessments, Congregation Profile, and Clergy Profiles are due August 11
Parsonage Transition Process
2016

PARSONAGE STANDARDS POLICY (Item #24, 2015 Arkansas Conference Journal, pg. 414):

“When there is a Pastoral Change, the house shall be inspected by the Chairpersons of the Trustees and the Pastor Parish Relations Committee, one other member of the Parsonage Committee, if formed, and the Pastor before the Pastor leaves for his/her new situation, to make a list of needed repairs. These repairs shall be accomplished prior to the arrival of the succeeding pastor. When moving day arrives, a final “walk through” conducted by the pastor with the above persons shall occur for a final assessment. Before a move, the departing pastor shall invite the incoming pastor to see the parsonage. Any redecorating should include consultation with the incoming pastoral family.”

Actions to be Completed during the Pastoral Transition

1. The Cabinet will establish the official Arkansas Annual Conference moving date annually.
2. The Parsonage Committee/Board of Trustees will make arrangements with the departing pastor for the incoming pastor to conduct a ‘walk-through’ visit of the parsonage as soon as possible after the appointment change has been announced.
3. The departing pastor and Parsonage Committee/Board of Trustees will jointly make a list of needed maintenance and repairs, furnishings that should be supplied and necessary upgrades to bring the house into compliance with annual conference parsonage standards. This meeting should be held as soon as possible after the appointment change has been announced so work can be completed prior to moving day.
4. The Parsonage Committee/Board of Trustees will take photos to document any excessive damage caused by the pastoral family beyond ‘normal wear and tear’. The Parsonage Committee/Board of Trustees may request a 2016 Parsonage Damage Report form from District Superintendent if damage exceeds ‘normal wear and tear’.
5. The Staff Parish Relations Committee will confirm the date the departing pastor will move, determine any special assistance the incoming pastor may need during the moving process, and coordinate housing needs if the incoming pastoral family cannot move into the parsonage because of incomplete maintenance, repairs and upgrades.
6. The Parsonage Committee/Board of Trustees and Staff Parish Relations Committee will conduct a final walk-through prior to the outgoing pastor’s departure.
7. The Parsonage Committee/Board of Trustees should develop a clear understanding with the incoming pastor concerning pets, special accommodations and any maintenance responsibilities of the pastor.
8. The departing pastor may submit a voucher for allowable reimbursable moving expenses as determined by Annual Conference policy. The Staff Parish Relations Committee Chair and the District Superintendent must sign the voucher before it may be submitted to the Center for Administrative Services.
9. If the departing pastor vacates a parsonage with damage beyond ‘normal wear and tear’, the Staff Parish Relations Committee may request the District Superintendent to allocate moving expenses up to the allowable limit for any needed repairs.

Updated 4/13/2016
Parsonage Pastoral Transition Checklist
2016

PARSONAGE STANDARDS POLICY (Item #24, 2015 Arkansas Conference Journal, pg. 414):
“When there is a Pastoral Change, the house shall be inspected by the Chairpersons of the Trustees and the Pastor Parish Relations Committee, one other member of the Parsonage Committee, if formed, and the Pastor before the Pastor leaves for his/her new situation, to make a list of needed repairs. These repairs shall be accomplished prior to the arrival of the succeeding pastor. When moving day arrives, a final “walk through” conducted by the pastor with the above persons shall occur for a final assessment. Before a move, the departing pastor shall invite the incoming pastor to see the parsonage. Any redecorating should include consultation with the incoming pastoral family.”

Pastors moving to a new appointment may submit a voucher for moving expenses to the Conference Administrative Services office. The sending District Superintendent shall not submit a voucher for moving expenses unless the parsonage is left clean and meets the approval of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee Chairperson. If a pastor leaves a parsonage with damage (other than “normal wear and tear”), then the moving expense may be paid to the church to provide for repairs. This payment must be requested by the District Superintendent and shall not exceed the amount of allowable moving expense.

In order to provide the District Superintendent with appropriate information regarding damage caused by the pastor or pastor’s family to which the church may make a claim for part or all of the $1000 moving expense funds, please complete this form and submit photos of damage, receipts for damage repairs, and other pertinent verification materials no later than August 15th of the current year.


Date of last annual inspection of parsonage:______________
Was any damage visible at that time? If so, please describe:

Did the Trustee and/or the Pastor Parish Relations Committee create a written covenant with the pastor upon the pastor’s arrival outlining each party’s responsibilities for regular parsonage maintenance in accordance with parsonage standard policies of the Arkansas Conference? If so, please attach a copy and briefly describe how the pastor or church may have not addressed their respective responsibilities outlined in the covenant:

Date of parsonage walk through before pastor vacated:______________
Description of visible damage beyond normal wear and tear:

Updated 4/13/2016
Parsonage Pastoral Transition Checklist
2016

Date of parsonage walk through after pastor vacated: ______________
Description of damage beyond normal wear and tear (print and attach photos or email photos):

The pastor is responsible for any damage caused by pets, personal guests or family members. Is the
damage related to pets? Was there any formal written agreement between the pastor and the
church regarding pets in the parsonage?

The pastor’s family is responsible for cleaning the parsonage when they move out, including
residual tobacco smoke and any odors from pets. Did the pastor sufficiently clean the parsonage?

If not, did the church pay for professional cleaning services?

Further comment or evidence of damage:

___________________________________________________

Chair, Pastor/Staff Parish Committee  Date  Chair, Trustees  Date

Please save a copy for your records, print and send with attached photos and documents to your
District Superintendent before August 15th of the current year.

Updated 4/13/2016
Prepare to welcome your new pastor

☐ 1. Open your hearts and decide that you are going to love your new pastor.
☐ 2. Begin praying daily for the new pastor and family, even as you continue to pray for your departing pastor and family.
☐ 3. Invite church members individually to send cards of welcome and encouragement to the incoming pastor.
☐ 4. Know that welcoming your new pastor in genuine and effective ways lays the groundwork for a healthy and vital relationship and the development of stable, long-term ministries together.
☐ 5. Plan for the transition. Occasionally important welcoming gestures are missed with everyone thinking someone else is handling these details.
☐ 6. Appoint a specific liaison person to whom the pastor can go for help and information during the transition.

Say goodbye to your current pastor in a healthy way

☐ 7. Show love, regard, and even grief, for your departing pastor. This is one of the best things you can do for the new pastor.
☐ 8. Acknowledge the change in public ways. Especially in the case of a much-beloved pastor, this allows the congregation better to let go and receive the new pastor.
☐ 9. Provide the congregation the opportunity to say thank you and goodbye to the outgoing pastor, even if things have not always gone well.
☐ 10. Find appropriate occasions — in worship and at other times — to thank the outgoing pastor.
☐ 11. Express appreciation in ways that are consistent with what you have done in the past.
☐ 12. Consider giving the pastor the last two weeks off. This helps the pastor enter the new situation rested and gives an emotional buffer between one pastor’s last Sunday and another pastor’s first Sunday.
☐ 13. Plan goodbye celebrations prior to the beginning of the two weeks off.

☐ 14. Provide information to the local media about the outgoing pastor’s accomplishments and future plans.
☐ 15. Do not invite the former pastor to return for weddings, funerals, or baptisms. This allows your former pastor to engage fully with his or her new congregation, and it establishes your new pastor as everyone’s pastor from the beginning.

Make things move-in ready

☐ 16. Make sure the parsonage and pastor’s office are clean and ready. Offer to provide help or a cleaning service if needed.
☐ 17. Determine if the parsonage is in need of repairs or painting. Consult the outgoing and incoming pastors about timing so as not to disrupt the lives of either party. Do not ask a new pastor to move into a parsonage “under construction.”
☐ 18. Consult the new pastor on any paint, design, or furnishings issues.
☐ 19. Offer to have someone cut the parsonage grass.
☐ 20. Make sure the new pastor and church officials are clear on how moving expenses are paid and all matters related to compensation, benefits, and reimbursement policies.

Welcome your pastor on moving day

☐ 21. Stock the parsonage refrigerator and pantry with some staples.
☐ 22. Make sure there are kid-friendly foods and snacks in the refrigerator if children are arriving.
☐ 23. Have a small group on hand to greet the new pastor and family when they arrive and to help as needed.
☐ 24. Offer child care if there is an infant or toddler in the household.
☐ 25. Invite children in the household to do things with others of their same age.
☐ 26. Welcome any youth in the household by having church youth group members stop by and offer to show them around.

Find more resources at churchleadership.com
Continue the welcome during the entry period

☐ 27. Take food over for the first few days. Many churches continue the practice of having a “pounding” for the new pastor when persons bring food items.

☐ 28. Provide a map with directions to local dry cleaners, grocery store, drug store, veterinarian, etc., and information on local options for internet and cable television providers.

☐ 29. Give gift certificates to several of your favorite restaurants in the community.

☐ 30. Give the pastor and family a welcome reception on the first Sunday.

☐ 31. Plan a worship celebration of the new appointment.

☐ 32. Invite the new pastor to any social events held by Sunday School classes or other groups in the early months.

☐ 33. Make sure the pastor’s spouse and children, if applicable, are invited to Sunday School and other appropriate small groups.

☐ 34. Continue to remember your new pastor and family in your daily prayers.

Help the new pastor become familiar with the congregation

☐ 35. Introduce yourself to the pastor repeatedly! You have one name to learn; your pastor has many names to learn.

☐ 36. Wear name tags. Even if name tags are not a tradition, the congregation can wear them for a few weeks to help the pastor learn names.

☐ 37. Provide a current pictorial directory of all the church members, if available.

☐ 38. Provide an up-to-date list of all church committees and officers.

☐ 39. Provide the new pastor with a tour of where things are kept inside the church and perhaps a floor plan of the facilities.

☐ 40. Orient the new pastor to information systems and the way records are kept.

☐ 41. Make sure the pastor has a list of home bound or nursing home members, a list of those struggling with long term illness, and a list of those still in grief over recent deaths in the family. Better yet, take the pastor for an introduction to each of these households.

☐ 42. Have an appropriate person offer to go with the pastor for introductions and support if there are particularly urgent pastoral situations (a member near death or the family of a member who has just died).

☐ 43. Have a lay official offer to take the pastor to meet church members in their businesses or other work settings, if they are easily accessible.

☐ 44. Offer to help arrange small group sessions to meet and talk with the congregation.

☐ 45. Create a “church yellow pages” (a list of people in the church who have specific skills that a newcomer may find beneficial…. auto mechanic, doctor, dentist, dry cleaners, book store, office supply, etc.).

Help the new pastor connect to the community

☐ 46. Provide local media with information about the new pastor.

☐ 47. Provide a list of hospitals, nursing homes, and community service agencies.

☐ 48. Introduce your new pastor to other clergy in the community. Provide information on any ecumenical activities or associations.

☐ 49. Introduce the new pastor to public and community leaders.

☐ 50. Ask church members in civic clubs to take the new pastor to one of their meetings.

Dr. Robert Crossman, Minister of New Church Starts and Congregational Development for the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, is the primary author of this document. The Lewis Center staff and others provided suggestions and editorial assistance.

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churchleadership.com/leadingideas
Concluding Ministry in One Setting:

Maintain good successor relations

☐ 1. Work with the congregation to prepare the way for your successor.
☐ 2. Work with your successor to provide good information about the congregation.
☐ 3. Spend significant time with your successor with an agreed-upon agenda.
☐ 4. Talk about your successor only in positive terms.
☐ 5. Avoid making comparisons between yourself and your successor.

Approach the move with a generous and graceful spirit

☐ 6. Share ownership for the move, and avoid blaming others.
☐ 7. Avoid making inappropriate use of closure to address unresolved problems.
☐ 8. Be gracious to everyone, especially those with whom you have had difficulty.

Provide good records and administrative wrap-up

☐ 9. Prepare essential lists for your successor, and be sure important files are up to date.
☐ 10. Make sure church bills are paid through the month you leave.
☐ 11. Ensure that denominational giving is up to date.
☐ 12. Never leave any unpaid personal bills in the community.
☐ 13. Do not take church records with you.

Plan for appropriate goodbyes, grief, and closure rituals

☐ 14. Provide adequate rituals to mark your leaving and the coming of your successor.
☐ 15. Find appropriate ways to say goodbye and grieve with the congregation.
☐ 16. Encourage loved ones to grieve the transition, and grieve with them.
☐ 17. Grant and ask for forgiveness where needed, and tell the people you love them.
☐ 18. Arrange personal visits and write personal notes where appropriate.

Clarify your new relationship with the church

☐ 19. Clarify in spoken and written communication your new relationship with the people.
☐ 20. Be clear that you will not be returning for pastoral roles.
☐ 21. Take time to teach the congregation about closure and boundaries.
☐ 22. Affirm love and friendship while releasing persons from pastoral relationships.

Keep working

☐ 23. Continue vital ministry, avoid emotional withdrawal, and do not initiate major new programs in the closing months.
☐ 24. Settle as many hanging difficulties as possible, including (and especially) staff difficulties.
☐ 25. Leave the parsonage and office clean and in order.

Beginning Ministry in a New Ministry Setting:

Learn about the new church and community

☐ 26. Allow 6–18 months to get to know the people and community.
☐ 27. Demonstrate willingness, and make the effort, to learn the history of the congregation.
☐ 28. Learn the mission and vision of the congregation and their place in the life of the people.
29. Study data (worship and financial statistics, community demographics, etc.) to understand the church and community.

30. Make careful assessments of strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities.

**Spend time with people and build relationships**

31. Make building relationships your highest priority, visiting as many people as you can.

32. Visit people with pastoral needs and also those with key leadership responsibilities.

33. Ask everyone you visit to suggest others with whom you should be talking.

34. Meet with the pastoral relations/personnel committee early and regularly.

35. Pay particular attention to pastoral care and preaching.

36. Meet community leaders including other clergy. Be visible in the community.

37. Develop a plan to get to know the people, communicate that plan, and stay faithful to it.

**Be cautious about making immediate changes**

38. Do not change things at first, especially worship.

39. Listen and observe with an open mind to discover strengths and needs.

40. Earn the right to change things before initiating changes.

**Build trust**

41. Express joy in being in your new ministry setting.

42. Be authentic, honest, and genuine.

43. Let people get to know you, and allow the congregation time to learn to trust you.

44. Focus on the congregation and its future, not your agenda.

45. If you introduce yourself in writing, have others read what you write to make sure you are not communicating unintended signals.

**Honor your predecessor’s ministry.**

46. Do not criticize the former pastor, even if criticism is warranted.

47. Honor the progress and achievements accomplished before you arrived.

48. Assure people it is all right to grieve the loss of their former pastor.

49. Honor traditions long enough to understand the positive motivation behind them.

50. Throughout it all, keep in mind: Avoid talking about your previous congregation. Do not complain, criticize, or make excessive demands. And be patient.

**Learn much more with “The Right Start.”**

*The Right Start* is a video-based training resource for clergy preparing to begin ministry in a new setting. It includes video instructional segments, resources, planning aids, and supplementary materials. The current version has been revised and enhanced with new materials on the relational aspect of transition, such as how to handle social media and issues of concern to single clergy and associate pastors. *The Right Start* is available in both Pastor’s and Group Training Versions.

Visit [churchleadership.com/rightstart](http://churchleadership.com/rightstart) today to learn more.

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Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

Pastoral Transition Covenant

The intention of this covenant is to act as a reminder of the importance of the relationship between pastor and congregation. To ensure a healthy transition from the current appointed pastor to the new appointed pastor all must exercise great self-restraint in order to allow for a relationship where the newly appointed pastor has the best opportunity to be effective in the service of our Lord Jesus. As the keepers of “order” in the church, Elders are charged with setting the example for all transitions in both word and deed.

The expectation of the exiting Pastor includes a responsibility to:

- Allow ourselves time to grieve the end of a pastoral and congregational relationship.
- Demonstrate “Radical Hospitality” in welcoming the incoming pastor, and providing essential information about the congregation that will aid the transition.
- Bear the primary responsibility for maintaining healthy boundaries as the “former pastor.”
- Discourage intentional contact with former members where the new pastor is criticized. Be supportive of your successor in all online commenting, texting, phone calls, etc.
- Understanding that, for the sake of the ongoing ministry of the church, some people may need to “unfriend” on Facebook or “unfollow” on Twitter and/or find ways to remove undue social media visibility.
- As a former pastor, you will not come back and function in a pastoral role in your previous mission field, unless invited by the current pastor. This is especially true in the case of weddings, funerals and hospital visits.
- Exit in a timely manner and leave the parsonage in better shape than you found it. Provide the Trustee and Pastor Parish Chairs a list of needed repairs or maintenance items and use what political capital you have to make certain the parsonage meets the needs of the new pastor’s family.

As covenant partners, both new appointed pastors and exiting pastors are expected to:

- Hold one another in prayer.
- Either speak positively or remain silent in public or private communications regarding one another. We are in a covenant as United Methodist Pastors.

Adopted by Clergy Session
Arkansas Annual Conference 2014

vitality.arumc.org/pastoral-transition-resources/
It’s Biblical: Women in Ministry

By Rev. Michael Roberts, D. Min.

While the issue of women in ordained ministry has been settled in the United Methodist Church for years, it is still an issue for many in the larger Body of Christ. United Methodists Christians are frequently confronted by others who question this inclusiveness. Thus, it is important to have biblical and theological resources to affirm our view.

Passage after passage of scripture gives support for the leadership role of women in the church. In a time when women were devalued as persons, Jesus and the early church showed little sympathy for the prevailing attitude. He considered all people as equal children of God, worthy of God’s love, and gifted for ministry. In the Gospels, women are mentioned on numerous occasions. For example, in one passage Jesus spent time with a Samaritan woman, to the shock of the disciples. This woman went on to serve as the first female preacher, for “many Samaritans from this city believed in him because of this woman’s testimony” (John 4:39). Another story shows that Jesus encouraged women to sit and learn from him in a time when it was highly unusual, even contemptible, for a woman to be discussing religious matters with men (Luke 10:38f). In the gospels we learn that women were among the disciples and stayed close to him even at the time of his death, while the men fled with fear (Luke 8:2; 23:55). It was a woman who was the first to proclaim the resurrection (John 20:1f). In the gospels Jesus healed women, taught women, and called women to participate in His ministry. Given the tunes, this was remarkable indeed.

In other New Testament writings we have a remarkable witness to the leadership role of women. While there are a couple of passages that are frequently taken out of context and used to support opposition, the weight of the New Testament is supportive of women in leadership. In the Book of Acts, for example, we have the witness of women like Lydia, Dorcas, Priscilla, and the daughters of Phillip (Acts 1:14, 2:14-17, 8:12, 9:36, 16:14-15, 21:9). In the letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul mentions several women who were leaders in the church. He writes, “I commend to you our sister Pheobe, that you may receive her in the Lord and help her in whatever she may require of you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well” (Romans 16:1). Pheobe was a leader in the church at Rome. In the same chapter Paul calls Priscilla “a fellow worker in Christ, who risked her neck for my life, to whom not only I but also all the churches give thanks” (Romans 16:3). He says that Euodia and Syntyche are persons who have “labored side by side with me in the gospel” (Philippians 4:2). From these passages, we learn that women were considered equals, co-workers in ministry. The people were told to listen to them. Women were encouraged to use their gifts and appreciated for it.

Reservations concerning women in ministry stem from basically two very brief passages: I Timothy, 2:11 and I Corinthians 14:34, both stating that women should remain silent in worship and should not have authority over men. There are multiple ways to faithfully interpret these passages. One way is to acknowledge that the principles of scriptures are often interpreted in culturally specific ways and thus reflect the customs and norms of the time. For example, very few Christians believe that women should be wearing veils in worship, even though it is stated in scripture. In this same way, and in light of the
It’s Biblical:  
Women in Ministry

overwhelming evidence for women in ministry found elsewhere, we can conclude that these calls for 
silence are culturally specific and do not apply to our time and culture. We can still, however, learn from 
the principles of authority and orderly worship behind these statements. Concerning the Corinthian 
passage it can be said that Paul was speaking about a specific group of women who were disrupting 
the church. He is not making a general proclamation. This seems reasonable since he speaks favorably 
about women praying in church earlier in the same letter (I Cor 11:4-5). It might also be possible to say 
that Paul himself was a growing Christian and as such sometimes reverted to old ways of thinking. Then 
he would catch himself and preach the true gospel, saying things like “In Christ there is neither Jew nor 
Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28).

The United Methodist Church is an inclusive church because the scriptures mandate it. We seek to grow 
from the gifts and graces of all. We believe that we are living in the time that Peter talked about when 
he quoted from the prophet Joel, “In the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit 
upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17). Peter proclaimed that this 
prophecy had come true that day. It was the day of Pentecost and God was indeed pouring out the Holy 
Spirit. Today, we strive to make ourselves open to the “outpouring of God’s Spirit upon all flesh.” We do 
not want to limit God’s work in our lives, nor do we want to miss out on the blessings that come to us 
as others allow God to pour out his Spirit upon them.
Celebration your new pastor. Know that your new pastor continues a tradition of women in ministry going back to biblical times. Do all that you typically do to welcome a male pastor, including praying for her daily. Give her a generous opportunity to fulfill her ministry, and let any judgment be by the biblical standard of fruitfulness.

Treat her as your pastor first. Avoid putting gender first in conversations about her. Talk about her as you would a new male pastor. Use the proper title, or ask what she would like to be called. Avoid using terms of affection, and resist language such as “woman pastor” or “lady pastor.” And do not lower compensation due to gender or assumptions of other sources of income or benefits coverage.

She will bring unique gifts for ministry. Learn your pastor’s gifts rather than making gender assumptions. She has both strengths and limitations, just as your male pastors had. Most of your delights and objections will not be gender-based. Respect different types of leadership. Some male pastors are not very good. The same goes for women. If she isn’t serving your church well, it is not because she’s a woman.

Expect some resistance but avoid making very much of it. Expect some push back, especially if this is a new experience for your church. A few may leave, but far more are likely to join. Resist assuming the worst and making too much of it. Clergywomen are common in today’s world. Avoid allowing negative voices to dominate. Ask people to keep an open mind. Most resistance is based on the unknown.

Avoid stereotyping and assumptions. Keep pastoral expectations as before. Don’t assume she will be good with children but not finance. Don’t expect her to bring treats for meetings. Women often have family responsibilities but so do many men. Resist asking about her personal life, relationships, or family plans that you would not ask a male pastor.

Some things may not fit. Be open to repainting the office and replacing the pastor’s chair if it no longer fits the occupant. The pulpit may need adjustment for height, and make sure the sound system works for a female voice, especially if it’s high or soft.

Make sure there is a trusted feedback group. Your new pastor needs regular honest feedback from those committed to her success. Assure that someone is asking your new pastor how things are going and listen. A trusted group that listens makes the pastor more open to receiving feedback she needs to improve.

Avoid references to appearance. Avoid making comments about her size, shape, or appearance. How she dresses or does her hair should not be a topic of conversation. Avoid such comments that would never be made to a male pastor.

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I have had more comments about my hair style than I can count, including “I am so glad you cut your hair; your last hair style was distracting when you preached.”

Pay attention to boundary issues. Take seriously any concerns a female pastor expresses about sexual harassment or unwanted actions involving staff, parishioners, or others. All clergywomen encounter such situations at some point. Train church leadership in how to recognize when harassment or sexism is at play. Members need reminding that “If you didn’t say it to a male pastor, don’t say it to a female pastor. If you didn’t kiss your male pastor, don’t do it now.”

I’m the third female pastor, and I have no sense that people still object to having a female pastor, but they do still say inappropriate things!

The all purpose question to remember: “Would you honestly ask (say, criticize) this if the pastor were a man? If so, okay. If not, drop it.”

Clergywomen graduates of Lewis Fellows, a Lewis Center leadership development program for young clergy, provided the content for this resource.

A companion Lewis Center resource is “Why Women Are Clergy.”
Suggestions for Churches with a Young Pastor

Churches that receive a young pastor need to remember how lucky they are. Many congregations say they want a younger pastor, but few have the opportunity. They ought not, however, assume their church will automatically reach younger people simply because of the age of the pastor. Having a young pastor might improve the likelihood of a congregation connecting with young people, but not without openness to other kinds of change. Congregations sincere in their desire to work with a younger pastor to reach emerging generations must be flexible and open to new ideas and possibilities. Take the initiative in asking the young pastor for ways in which your church can become more inviting for younger people.

Congregants are encouraged to treat a young clergyperson as a pastor, not as they would act toward their children or grandchildren. It can be helpful to consider how one regards other young professionals. A patient being treated by a young doctor, for example, may not be able to help thinking, “That doctor is young enough to be my child or grandchild.” But that kind of thinking is quickly set aside in deference to the doctor’s professional role. In the end, many older people find themselves reassured when dealing a younger professional who has the benefit of more recent training. This is the same kind of regard the congregation can offer to a young pastor. Show respect for your pastor by avoiding any remarks about age that could appear to lessen the pastor’s standing. One reason such support is important is that, while laity quickly discover the gifts younger clergy bring and accept their leadership, the same may not be true for staff now supervised by someone younger than they are. Pay special attention to language you and others use for young clergywomen, who routinely report the use of “little lady,” “cute,” and “darling.”

Church members can also take time to remember what it was like to be young or to be responsible for a young family. Then they may not be too quick to criticize a young pastor who struggles with the number of night meetings on the calendar. Expecting around the clock availability from a pastor is unreasonable, regardless of his or her age.

Remember how important your support and care can be for young pastors. Many patterns and attitudes are shaped in those early years of ministry. Pray for them. Invite them for a meal. Understand their special challenges. Many are away from their support networks. Increasing numbers bring substantial educational debt. Be their advocate for adequate compensation, proper parsonage standards, and observance of maternity and paternity leave. Also encourage habits that can sustain the pastor over a long-term ministry such as regular Sabbath, time for renewal and sermon preparation, vacation time, and continuing education.

Younger and older generations in the church would do well to keep in mind the adage “We’re all in this together.” Especially within the community of faith, what unites us in Christ is far greater than what divides us as representatives of one generation or another. We are called in “all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love and making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit . . . .” (Ephesians 4:2-4 NRSV)

Adapted from The Crisis of Younger Clergy by Ann A. Michel and Lovett H. Weems, Jr. (Abingdon Press, 2008) with additions from young clergy participants in the Lewis Center’s Lewis Fellows Program. Used by permission.

For more information, please visit churchleadership.com/programs/young_clergy.htm
Suggestions for Churches with a Single Pastor

All clergy face many challenges. But single persons in ministry can face a unique set of challenges around maintaining boundaries, privacy, and social connections, particularly if they serve in a congregation that has only been served in the past by married clergy. Some of the best advice for churches comes from a young single pastor — “congregations and pastors both should work on the tender balance between being supportive and allowing privacy.”

Church members can often subconsciously communicate the assumption that they expect their pastor to be married. For example, a single clergyman starting ministry in a new congregation was asked repeatedly “When will be meeting your wife?” or “Will your wife be teaching Sunday School or serving on the altar guild?” Similarly, congregants can project the assumption that marriage is normative for or sought by everyone when they drop hints about eligible friends the pastor might like to meet. While these kinds of comments are generally well intended, they can make a single person feel awkward, judged, or even inadequate. Congregations need to be sensitive to and accepting of different marital statuses among clergy.

It is easy for single clergy to fall into the trap of letting the church become their primary social outlet and support network. This is especially true if they have left behind friends and family to begin ministry in a new church and community. It is important to recognize that all clergy, but especially single clergy, need to build a set of relationships and friendships outside the church — people for whom they are not the “pastor.” This may mean that they seek opportunities for involvement beyond the church, such as book clubs, sports teams, or community groups, and find people who share common interests. Churches can encourage them to take time off to renew themselves and to connect with friends and family. Encourage them to connect with other clergy in the community that you feel will be supportive colleagues.

Single clergy often feel they are navigating a minefield when it comes to dating. In addition to fix-up attempts, they have concerns about a lack of privacy, the potential for rumors and ill-informed assumptions, and questions about when and how to let the congregation know about a serious relationship. These all can leave a single clergyperson vulnerable and confused. You can help by recognizing that it is normal and important for them to date. Trust the pastor to operate within their own level of comfort regarding how much they share with the congregation.

It is important that the congregation be aware of norms and expectations about whether it is appropriate for pastors to date congregants. Denominations or judicatories normally have clearly defined policies on this question, usually not permitting such dating. Both pastor and congregation must understand these policies and their rationale. Appropriate church leaders may need to educate the congregation about the policies. But always remember that great sensitivity is required so that this issue does not loom too large in people’s minds or distract from the larger issues in establishing the pastor’s ministry.

Single clergy who are parents may also feel they are vulnerable or open to special scrutiny. Pay attention to expectations for evening meetings and the need for childcare. Such care will also benefit other church members. The church does not have special responsibility for the pastor’s childcare but should do everything possible to make possible the active participation of those with young children.

*Lewis Fellows, participants in a Lewis Center leadership development program for young clergy, contributed to this resource.*

For more information, please visit churchleadership.com/programs/young_clergy.htm