

MOVE PACK

A Guide to a Good Move for Lay Leadership

*East Ohio Conference
of the United Methodist Church*





Move Pack

A Guide to a Good Move for Lay Leadership

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First You Pray

Devotional Resources

Prayers

These prayers focus upon the presence of God during times of change.

All-knowing, All-seeing One,
in these days of uncertainty, be present in our hearts and souls.
In these days of anticipation, be present in our minds and spirits.
In these days of change, be present in our times and spaces.
And grant us your deep peace.

d

God of Grace and God of Glory,
pour upon our church your generous heart of love.
Grant that we may have gentle spirits when there is anxiety.
Grant that we might see hope for the future in our transition.
Grant that we might leave well and arrive well,
for we are surrounded by your Spirit
who knows and guides all things. Amen.

d

Gentle One,
Guard us in our sleep.
Guide us in our days.
Grant us your peace.
Give us your ways.
Gentle One,
go with us.

d

Merciful God,
In the midst of transition, transform us and keep calling us forth into the light. When there is worry, bring peace. When there is conflict, bring resolution. When there is anxiety, bring calm. When there is fear, bring hope. Walk with us, in this time of transition. Keep our hearts open so that we may be carried by your strength. Amen.

Searching the Scriptures

Searching the Scriptures for meaning is a practice called *lectio divina* — holy reading. Choose a passage, and read it slowly and silently. A second reading is to be read aloud and followed by another silent reading. Notice what words or phrases stand out (especially verbs). Either journal about what the word or phrase means for you or be in prayer with that word or phrase. Close by reading the passage again as the final prayer.

Scripture suggestions:

Psalms 4, 5, 103:1-5, 121, 130, 131, 139
Matthew 6:25-34, 13:31-33
Mark 1:16-20, 6:30-44
Luke 1:46-55, 9:1-6
John 15:1-11, 21:15-19
Romans 8:28-30
Colossians 3:12-17
2 Peter 1:3-10

Reflections from Pastors

"All Things New" by Sally Dyck

As I was driving back to my office after taking my husband to the airport, I was a little worried because he was flying on an airline that had had a plane crash the day before. My concern prompted me to reflect on my life as I sped along. "I love my life!" I thought to myself.

I was driving my beloved 10-year-old car. I thought to myself, "I like my car!" I couldn't imagine getting a new one. I thought about the house that my husband and I had owned for 13 years and after all the work we'd put into it, it was just the way we wanted it. "I like my house!" We had owned the house for the last 13 years because I had served the same church for that long, and, yes, "I love my church!" All of this was motivated by my original concern for my husband, so I concluded my litany by saying, "I love my husband of 21 years!" (You can tell from this litany that I'm not quick to change major components of my life!)

I dared to think out loud, "What a wonderful life! What could go wrong on a day like today?" I no sooner walked into my office than I was handed a message, requesting me to call the bishop. After reaching him, I discovered that everything in my life was about to change—except my husband.

Within weeks, the house was sold. I purchased a new car (my old sports car wasn't going to do well out in the hills where I was to be the new district superintendent). I said goodbye to my wonderful church and all my friends, and I moved away from the city I had lived in for the last 20 years.

"I am making all things new," it says in the scriptures (Revelation 21.5). I discovered that "all things new" can be a painful experience. Suddenly I had a new address and phone number (which I frequently forgot) and a new home (where I didn't always know where things were). I had a new car with features that were a mystery to me at times (one night I couldn't find the switch to turn on the bright headlights). I had a new job in a new office in a new town with a new set of people to work with and to develop into friends. Quite frankly, "all things new" brought a new experience of many tears and frustrations, loneliness and uncertainty.

Throughout the experience, the greatest discovery for me was how much we as a society, even the church, minimize the grief, sadness, and loss that all of us experience when we move—whether it's a planned and accepted move or not. As a pastor, I know that people are forever dealing with their anger in one way or another. I learned that some anger is really redirected and unresolved sadness. It's a lot easier to be mad than sad. Some people encouraged me to be mad because it's not as scary as sad—but I've just felt sad.

None of the things on my list of "all things new" was life threatening, but all of them brought a sense of loss and a corresponding sense of grief. I cannot bring myself to say that everything is all right. It probably will be, but I am not there yet. Psalm 30:11 says that God will turn our sadness (mourning) into joy. I wait upon the Lord!¹

A Path Toward Beginning Spiritual Balance

Moving throws us off balance. No matter what the circumstances that triggered our change of appointment, there is no denying that moving "upsets the apple cart" of our family, our congregation, and ourselves. In the midst of the physical disorder of moving, we attempt to maintain order, and so get busy with sorting, packing, organizing, looking toward the new and leaving the old behind. But then, a second wave of assault on our state of equilibrium looms on the horizon, threatening to strip us of the patience, poise, peace, and grace that we have come to expect from a life lived in faith.

This second wave cannot be worked through as quickly or efficiently as the first, for it involves people rather than possessions, and feelings rather than facts. Like Thomas who cries out at the news of Jesus' departure, we, too, cry out in confusion and fear. And in the lament, we, too, are reminded not to fear, for God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit will provide us with the means for turning what could be an awkward exit into a grace-filled goodbye. The following offers a prayerful approach to moving.

Share with God, family, friends and colleagues

- Offer your confusion, pain, fear, and budding anticipation to God.
- Invite God to be a part of this experience.
- Allow God to take your hand as you seek to regain your balance.
- Review your ministry with God, lifting the victories and disappointments.
- Listen for God's forgiveness and blessing.

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Share with your congregation

- Offer your feelings of grief, anxiety, and anticipation with grace-filled honesty and love.
- Invite the congregation to join you in the journey of sorting through feelings and memories in preparation for parting.
- Allow yourselves to work hand-in-hand in this process.
- Review the victories and disappointments of your life together, and dream of the future.
- Listen for forgiveness and blessing.

Letter to God on Moving

Dear God,

It's moving time again. I know I should be thankful for a roof over my head and indoor plumbing, for a place to park my car and my books. But I'm just not ready for the upheaval—again.

Again, I'm going to find some of my dishes do not fit in the dishwasher racks, and my stew pot doesn't fit in the cupboard, and my beds do not fit in the rooms, and furniture from a three-story house will go into the basement of a ranch. God, remind me to fix that nick in the plaster from moving the dining room furniture into the basement when we moved in.

Again, I'm leaving a garden that I've lovingly tended these last few years for new soil yet to be broken. I'm leaving my rose bushes, lilac bushes, tulips, and birdhouses. I'm leaving the harvest of my fall vegetables to another family.

*I'm leaving my
rose bushes,
lilac bushes,
tulips, and
bird houses*



Again, I have to get used to the taste of the water, and to the water pressure, and get acquainted with another set of major appliances that are veterans of major conflicts now passed. It seems I never get the chance to have new appliances.

Thanks for helping me find the document the DS wanted for the charge conference two years ago. I never would have thought to look in the dictionary next to "surreptitiously." I'm still wondering what to do with my past, particularly those boxes of books and old sermons I didn't unpack the last time I moved.

And dear Lord, please don't let folks read this—not the congregation I'm leaving nor the congregation receiving me. They might not understand, and they might take it personally. I want to appear strong, and I want them to have confidence in me. And don't let other clergy read this. I'm trying to keep a brave face and don't want anyone to know I'm in such turmoil—the sadness of leaving, the thrill of a new adventure, the fear of new places, the relief of so many confidences shared, the uneasiness of learning so many new names and faces, and the possibility of disappointing people when it doesn't happen all at once. And don't let my family read this. I'm trying to keep a confident face for them. I know I'm causing upheaval once again, for all of us, and I don't want them to see the fear I'm feeling about a new place, while, at the same time, they think their sacrifices for me are making me happy somehow.

I guess a large part of it is grieving. I've run out of time to mend those relationships I've damaged. I won't be able to make it up to those I've hurt. I won't get to finish the little projects around the parsonage—like the bench near the garden for taking my morning coffee. All my lobbying for a church directory, and now it will have the next pastor's face in it. I never did get to try that little coffee shop next to the bookstore. There never seemed to be enough time.

Yes, I admit another part of it is fear. I remember how much confusion there was when I moved in here, and how long it took us to come up with a common language to talk about things, and how long it took them to trust me. What if the same irritating, attacking person from the last two appointments shows up here in this new place as well? Will I identify that relationship before I've given away too many confidences?

I get so embarrassed when I have to look up my new address and telephone number because I can't remember them. Please remind me to be patient with the new people I'm meeting and to remember they are grieving the loss of a pastor, just like I am grieving the loss of several relationships, the loss of familiar roads, and the loss of a familiar address and phone number.

A Message from the Commission on Pastoral Care & Counseling

(The following was taken from the presentation of the Ohio East Area Commission on Pastoral Care & Counseling Report to Annual Conference in June of 2000. It is the hope of the Commission that it will contribute to the healthy functioning in your church.)

Don Houts, former Director of Pastoral Care and Counseling of the Illinois Area, in a new book, *Well-Being in Ministry*, calls pastors to take care of themselves, and to introduce his chapter, “Who Cares About the Clergy: Thoughts on Human Ecology,” he quotes from a newspaper article as he writes,

‘He grew up on a farm where you are only good if you work. It was his tradition to work too much. He had not taken a day off from his work in two years and he had no hobbies. He was a perfectionist, always driving himself. He was a hard-driving, ambitious kind of man.’

These comments give a cryptic description of the pastor who had committed suicide the day before. In less dramatic ways, clergy of all faiths and nations suffer when their personal needs are not adequately addressed. Philosophically we can describe these victims as a tragedy in human ecology. They represent not only great personal tragedy but also a failure of the faith communities which call them into ministry.²

The Commission on Pastoral Care & Counseling and the staff of the Office of Pastoral Care work at “Encouraging Well-Being in the East Ohio Community of Faith.” We are about being attentive to and working to provide support to hurting people whose “personal needs are not adequately addressed”—those who do ministry everyday.

A note to lay delegates: You are key leaders in your church and in this Conference, and you have an awesome role and responsibility. The Conference Commission on Pastoral Care & Counseling invites and challenges you to work collectively with us to build up the health of the Body of Christ in the Annual Conference.

Here is a glimpse of what it might be like to be a pastor. The call to ministry is one that comes with great sacrifice and giving. It certainly provides joy, yet we sometimes forget the challenges of ministry and the demands on the person called to serve and represent God in ministry. Most clergy work long days filled with constant interruption. Few tasks, Bible study preparations, or even personal devotional time can be completed without interruption and usually by a need that requires attention. In the job of being a pastor, one is always thought to be “on the job.”

You may not realize pastors may be exhausted because they are always on the job. They may not tell you they have worked more nights than they have had free ones. They may not tell you they have had to miss their children's sports events or dinner out with friends. They may not tell you they work many more hours than most people do. They may not tell you they earn less than most folks with their level of education. They may not tell you how hard it is to live in a home they cannot call their own. They may not tell you they often have surrendered their day off to visit someone having surgery. Ministry is a privilege, but it is also an overwhelming responsibility.

Ministry is about caring. Most ministers enjoy being part of your lives, nurturing your spiritual growth, and being a part of your sacred times of births, deaths, softball games, picnics, teen proms, confirmations, youth trips, church retreats, Advent and Lent, and so much more.

Pastors and their families are just like you and me. They are just as vulnerable to the stresses and strains that come from living in a world full of demands and challenges. They are just as at risk for depression and anxiety and family problems as each of you are.

The Commission on Pastoral Care & Counseling challenges you to stop and think about when and how you and your church can provide spiritual and emotional support to your pastor and his or her family. Think about how you might encourage your pastor and his or her family to take care of themselves. Think about ways you and your church friends and leaders can say thank you. God has called pastors to fill a job for a giant, but with your help, support, and partnership, we can do the work of ministry together.

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¹Dyck, Sally. “All Things New.” *Alive Now* May/June 1998. Used by Permission.

²Houts, Donald C. “Who Cares about the Clergy. Thought on Human Ecology.” *Well-Being in Ministry*. Eds. James F. Cobble, Jr. and Donald C. Houts. Matthews, NC. CMR Press. 1999. Qtd. In *Kansas City Star* June 25, 1975.

Books to Consider

Celtic Parables: Stories, Poems and Prayers by Robert Van de Weyer. Pilgrim Press, 1997.

Occasions of Prayer: Resources for Prayerful Living by Lisa Withrow. Pilgrim Press, 1999.

The Gift of Prayer: A Treasury of Personal Prayer from the World's Spiritual Traditions.

A Fellowship in Prayer Book. Continuum, 1997.

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Good Ideas for a Move

For many people, the thought of moving brings with it a sense of “overwhelmedness,” regardless of whether you have six months or six days to prepare for the event. Moving means pulling up roots and then actively replanting yourself in a new home, a new community, and a new life. Church congregations are in a position to have a major influence on the ease or the struggle a new pastor may have in settling in and making a transition.

As United Methodists, we have a heritage grounded in John Wesley’s circuit riders who traveled to spread God’s word wherever they were needed. Today, “intineration” is real to you as you find yourself preparing to receive a new pastor. Whether your pastor is moving alone or with family or pets, this is a time when life may be exciting and/or it may be excruciatingly difficult. Welcoming a pastor well and embracing him or her during a time of great transition will go a long way in establishing a good foundation for the pastor’s ministry with your church.

In this section, you will find concrete ideas and suggestions to help you to facilitate a smooth move. The reality of how to get it all done and determining what needs to be done is one place to begin your journey. Be open and helpful. Discuss with your pastor how you and the other church leaders can be the most helpful to and supportive of your pastor—the one leaving you and the one joining you. Form teams of church members to take on specific tasks so the burden of preparation does not fall too heavily on any one person. Spread the opportunities around so many may share their gifts and graces. We are all called to a ministry of hospitality, of welcoming the stranger. Embrace this opportunity!

Before the Move

Prepare Ye the Way for Your New Pastor

- Prepare the way to welcome your new pastor. Provide him or her with information and introductions to key areas and persons in the life of the church and the community. Begin to prepare the congregation to welcome and receive a new pastor gladly.
- Meet with the new pastor, when possible, to give an overview of the church’s ministry, goals, and vision. Utilize the time together to answer his or her questions and to share information that will contribute to the health of the church.
- Resist any desire to share information that may prevent the incoming pastor from being free to express his or her own vision for the church.
- Refrain from making comparisons to the former pastor.
- Recognize that you are colleagues in ministry, and both the pastor (and family) and the church congregation are experiencing a major life change. Consider how you might mutually support one another.

Who’s Who

- Discuss with your current pastor and your newly appointed pastor what you can do to be helpful.
- Remember some new pastors appreciate background on congregational members from a trusted member of the congregation while others want to approach new people with no preconceptions.
- Do your best when discussing people to provide only necessary information in an unbiased way.
- Do not share information that will not contribute to the health of the church.
- Do not prejudice the incoming pastor by making specific comments about specific members.
- Provide a copy of the most recent pictorial directory, adding snapshots you have taken of new members. If your church does not have a pictorial directory, make one! Ask members to stop by the fellowship hall before or after church for a few Sundays and take snapshots. Print the names below the pictures and organize them alphabetically by last name. Remember: A picture is worth a thousand words!

Moving Checklist

The following items include actions that should be completed or items that should be prepared for the incoming pastor to facilitate a smooth transition. Work in cooperation with your current pastor to spread out the administrative work and to ensure everything is current and in order for the incoming pastor.

Membership & Other Records

- ☐ Be sure the membership roll is current and up-to-date.
- ☐ Provide a list of all changes to the roll since the last charge conference.
- ☐ Make a list of homebound members, phone numbers, and directions to their homes.
- ☐ Provide a record of baptisms and marriages.
- ☐ Provide pertinent files: Charge Conference records, Annual Report forms, etc.

Pastoral Care

- ☐ Provide a list of those needing pastoral care due to serious illness, recent deaths, etc.
- ☐ Provide a list of scheduled weddings requiring premarital counseling.
- ☐ Provide a list of the area hospitals and nursing homes with their phone numbers and information about how to obtain clergy identification, if needed.
- ☐ Provide a list of members in college or in the military. Include addresses and any notes that may be helpful.

Personnel/Church Leadership/Volunteers

- ☐ Provide the names and positions of persons employed by the church and terms of their employment.
- ☐ Provide a list of who is responsible for the bulletin, newsletter, etc.
- ☐ Provide a list of the Administrative Board/Council members.
- ☐ Provide a list of Sunday school teachers, youth leaders/workers, etc.
- ☐ Provide a list of individuals available for pulpit supply.

Policies

- ☐ Leave a copy of all church policies—for child safety, building use, weddings, funerals, personnel, etc.
- ☐ Leave information in reference to any ongoing arrangements with individuals or groups (AA, Boy or Girl Scouts, etc.).

Church Schedule

- ☐ Provide a meeting schedule (Board/Council, Committees, UMM, UMW, UMY, etc.).
- ☐ Provide dates for events scheduled by the church, including annual events such as Christmas Bazaar, Soup Kitchen, Mother-Daughter dinners, etc.
- ☐ Provide information pertaining to pending legal matters—wills, possible liability situations.
- ☐ Provide a list of continuing ecumenical experiences, such as a community Thanksgiving service with the local churches rotating the host church.

The Church Building

- ☐ Leave a set of keys, well-identified.
- ☐ Provide name(s) and phone numbers of those who open/close the building(s) on Sundays.
- ☐ Put together a file of any warranties, maintenance contracts, and manuals on all office equipment, heating/cooling systems, etc.
- ☐ Be sure the pastor's office is cleaned thoroughly and in good repair. If the office will be painted or new furniture will be purchased, include the new pastor in the decisions.
- ☐ Leave a list of any maintenance items requiring attention or a schedule of things on the docket.

Parsonage Administration

- ☐ Leave a set of keys, well-identified.
- ☐ Put together a file of all appliance manuals and warranties (refrigerator, dishwasher, washer, dryer, heating/air conditioning unit, etc.).
- ☐ Identify switches or fuse box circuits.
- ☐ Schedule a parsonage visit about a month before the move. Make a list of repairs and improvements that need to occur immediately as well as those that need less urgent attention. If any painting, wallpapering, or carpeting is planned, consult the incoming pastor regarding choices. Remember the parsonage will be the pastor's home. Including him or her in decisions will help in making a positive transition.
- ☐ Have all utilities, including phone, gas, electric, water, and cable, put in the church's name so the incoming pastor does not have to provide security deposits and transfer utilities—which would be an additional expense to the church.
- ☐ Be sure the church office has the departing pastor's new address and phone number in the event any mail needs to be forwarded.

The Move Process

Packing and Unpacking

- Ask first before helping. When your pastor indicates what is most helpful, listen and follow through. Provide the help he or she needs.
- Offer to help pack or unpack. Be sensitive to the fact that some pastors and/or their families prefer to pack by themselves while others would welcome another set of hands.
- Offer childcare if the pastor has children.
- Assemble a crew of church members to wash windows and baseboards, to vacuum, and to deep clean each room as the movers move the items out.

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Encourage your pastor to take time to get unpacked before throwing oneself into the work of the church. It is important to get settled. If the pastor has moved with a family, the congregation should not assume the family will handle the unpacking; the pastor should be involved in it. Also, recognize that if your pastor has moved alone, he or she has the burden of unpacking alone, and thus, additional time and support may be needed. Unpacking will only be harder if the pastor waits, and it will become an energy drain. Allowing and encouraging your pastor the time to make his or her house a home is an important way to show you care and to help him or her get off to a good start.

Welcoming Ways

Moving Day

- Show a welcoming presence! Meet the pastor or pastor and family when they arrive.
- Have a move-in team. Offer to have a few men and women who will help set up bed frames, make beds, or attend to other items that need to be put together. Ask members of the work team to bring their own tools. Stay and help as long as it is helpful and then give the pastor (and family) some personal space.
- Remember one of the most important ways to welcome your new pastor (and family) is to have the parsonage ready—the house should be scrubbed spotless. Be sure every cupboard is wiped out, the fridge is scrubbed, and the bathroom and shower are completely sanitized. Scrub carpets and give a fresh coat of paint where needed or wanted. Do not forget the washer, dryer, furnace and air conditioning filters. Give special attention to all cleaning if the departing pastor had pets.
- Decide if the incoming pastor (and family) will need to be put up somewhere if extensive repairs/remodeling are to be done in the parsonage. Decide if furniture will need to be stored for a few days until the repairs and maintenance are done.

*Show a
welcoming
presence*



- Provide, or at least offer, lodging on the move night for the incoming pastor (and family). It is usually much appreciated.
- Offer childcare during the move-in process, if needed.
- Have flowers from someone's garden waiting in the parsonage.
- Put a welcome banner in the front yard or inside the house. Invite the youth group or a Sunday school class to prepare it ahead of time.
- Have the refrigerator and cupboard stocked with the basics—milk, bread, butter, cereal, peanut butter, jam, juice, trash bags, paper bowls, plates, and plastic utensils. Doing so will allow the pastor (and family) to delay that first dash to the grocery store.
- Make sure all the bathrooms have toilet paper, a roll of paper towels, and soap.
- Place a typed page of quick reference information on the parsonage kitchen counter. Include such information as: emergency numbers, a doctor's number, church number, names and telephone numbers of members who can provide answers to questions or assist with any problems.
- Contact the pastor (and family) a few weeks before the move regarding the church's plans to provide some meals. Ask about any dietary preferences or restrictions. Provide at least one meal per day for the first week. Use containers that do not need to be returned. Provide lunch and dinner on moving day, but check ahead of time to find out if that would be helpful. If the move is a short distance, the pastor may be running back and forth the day of the move, so it is best to schedule the time the food will be dropped off. If your pastor has moved alone, be sure to provide food for one not for a family of five!

More Welcoming Gestures

- Have the new pastor (and family) for dinner. Inquire about special dietary needs, and do not allow the special considerations to hinder this bonding time of fellowship.
- Have a pounding reception. This is a historical tradition in which the congregation members bring a pound of "something" for the new family. Encourage folks to be creative—i.e., to give a pound of toothbrushes and toothpaste, paper products, ice cream, popcorn, videos, etc. This is a fun way to welcome a pastor.
- Consider having a gift assortment of detergent, paper towels, soap, toothpaste, paper and pens, and snack foods as a nice welcome gift at the parsonage or church office. Parishioners can drop things off without labeling them, and the pastor will not have to thank each person or return dishes later.

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- Gather together maps of the local area—provide at least two copies. Mark the locations of grocery stores, gas stations, schools, recreation areas, hospitals, movie theaters, etc.
- Send a gift subscription for the local paper immediately after the announcement of the new pastor.
- Offer to arrange a day (maybe even prior to move) when an individual or another family from the church can show the incoming family around the community and take them out for lunch. Plan to include area parks, libraries, shopping areas, etc.
- Make a list of any special community activities available in your town or area. Make your list diverse and try to include things that would also appeal to children, youth, or couples if the pastor is moving with a family.
- Put together a list of free things to do in the area.
- Provide a list of doctors, dentists, and veterinarians who are accepting new patients. Provide a list of pharmacies, too.
- Provide the names of neighbors and businesses, such as local housecleaning businesses, the closest grocery, the best grocery store, a gas station, a car repair place, a quick oil change place, a good dry cleaner, banks and their hours, etc.
- Indicate the location of the nearest walk-in immediate care medical center for colds or minor emergencies. Be sure to include the address and phone number.
- Prepare a list of phone numbers of reliable babysitters if the pastor has young children. Include any information you know, such as the age of a teen you are recommending and who the teen's parents are. Also, provide information about professional sitter services. If the sitters are in your church family, indicate that as well.
- Have a church family adopt the pastor (and family) for a day. The purpose of the day can be to introduce them to people and businesses—banking, shopping, groceries, dry cleaning, and medical facilities—in the community. Be gracious in your offer, knowing some people prefer to venture on their own.
- Compose a list of area restaurants—include carryout menus, too. Include addresses and other information, such as: “Great Chicken Cashew” or “Best Pizza in Town.”
- Put together all the information you can about opportunities available to a new resident. Think through questions you could answer and write out the information. For example: Are there any fine arts opportunities—theatres? Orchestra? What about recreational facilities, such as a YMCA or other community locations? Is there a community swimming pool? Skating? Bowling? Skiing? Golfing?
- Encourage members to write to the pastor (and spouse) to offer a welcome before the move. Encourage a pen-pal relationship between the pastor's children and children of similar ages before the move. It is particularly nice to connect the pastor's children with children who might be in the same class so they can ask questions and have a friend or two going into the new school. If your church does not have children to make a match, perhaps you could talk with other area churches, or perhaps teachers in your church might have suggestions for making connections.

Farewell Celebration Ideas

Celebrate the ministry of the outgoing pastor (and family) with appropriate recognition, appreciation, and farewell event. This helps both the outgoing pastor (and family) and congregation in working toward a healthy conclusion of a pastor's ministry to the congregation.

Because clergy (and their families) are different from each other, it is important to plan a farewell celebration *appropriate* for your pastor (and family). Consider the pastor's individual personality and preferences so you may select the right “format” for the celebration.

In all instances, the celebration should include the family and a presentation of a love gift. If there are other family members, it is appropriate to provide a small gift for each person so everyone will feel included.

Consider the timing of the event. Remember the “leaving celebration” is a marker that your ministry together is coming to an end. Doing everything too early can leave a void for the pastor and congregation and thus create confusion about how to interact with one another. Yet, doing everything at the last minute or on the final Sunday is a bit late as it does not allow quite enough time for lingering goodbyes. It may also be a time too emotionally fragile to fully enjoy a goodbye celebration.



Most churches have found a dinner or reception allows the church community to gather together and say their goodbyes. If you would like to have more of an “event,” you might consider one of the following and also have a dinner or reception afterward.

- A tree planting ceremony to commemorate the pastor’s ministry.
- A “roast” in which church members share memories and laughter created around the good times had with the church family. Remember a roast is great for some and very uncomfortable for others.
- A farewell concert given by the choir or a musical group in the area.
- A drama or skits (several groups in the church could do skits) depicting the life of the church.
- A church talent show dedicated to the pastor.
- A picnic with entertainment, such as clowns or face painting or roving musicians.

At your goodbye celebration you might:

- Have a number of disposable cameras available and invite members to take pictures and leave the cameras at the event. Have the film developed and put the pictures in a photo album for the pastor (and family).
- Consider having someone video tape the event and present the tape to the pastor.
- Contact your local paper and invite them to write a story about your event. Be sure you take pictures appropriate for the paper (see guidelines within this publication).

Gift Ideas

- A scrapbook depicting the work of the committees and messages from the church members.
- A new chalice or stole. The church name and dates of service could be added to the back.
- A framed print, photograph, or drawing by a local artist.
- A gift box or basket full of things that are favored or enjoyed by the pastor, such as a basket of golf items or photography tools or gardening items.
- A gift certificate for a weekend away to a bed and breakfast.
- A collection of favorite novels from church members with a note written in each as to why it is a favorite book. Include a blank book so the pastor may collect his or her own memories.
- A church family quilt. Have cloth available for each family to make a representative footprint. (One footprint per family/household.) After all the footprints are arranged and attached to the quilt, use a laundry pen to put the family names on or around their print. You could stitch the church theme verse on this wonderful memento. Or create a quilt depicting the life of the church, having all the committees and groups provide a square.
- A goodbye gift for the outgoing children should also be prepared. Give them a special book, video, or pass to the zoo or amusement park. Or give them something in the vicinity of the new appointment.
- A clock with Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and the church name engraved on it.
- A farewell video. You could set it up ahead of time and allow people the privacy to say a personal message. Very meaningful things can be said and shared again and again.
- An album of letters from people in the congregation and community. You could send out an invitation to submit a letter on 8.5” x 11” paper and have them sent to someone in the church to collect and put into a book.
- A photo album chock-full of memories that have occurred during the pastor’s time with your church. Invite members to contribute their own photos of church events.
- A gift basket full of lots of small gifts but each with a tag or note attached that shares a thought or memory. It could be a memory basket or care package. For example, it could include things like local honey with the note: “For helping us learn to stick together,” or a fine pen with the note: “To replenish the ink from all the inspiring sermons you wrote and gave to us,” or a package of seeds with the note: “To thank you for all the seeds of faith you planted in us.” Be creative!

Care of Your Pastor

- Help your pastor carve out time for his or her spiritual disciplines. Although times of transition place extra demands on a pastor's time and energy, he or she needs to maintain his or her regular patterns of keeping faith with God.
- Work with your pastor to develop a self-care plan. Set limitations to the number of hours worked and include personal devotional/prayer time, recreation time, time with family and/or friends, and taking a day off consistently each week. Covenant with your pastor to help support the care plan.
- Honor your pastor's boundaries for privacy. Being a pastor (or the pastor's family) can be challenging at best. The job is a public job but one's personal life should be just that, a personal life. Do not meddle in the pastor's life. Be respectful.
- Be respectful of the pastor's home. If your pastor lives in your parsonage, realize it is his or her home and a sacred space away from the world; honor that.
- Establish clear boundaries about time off for Sabbath, for fun, and for renewal. The pastor should designate and honor a day off for personal time and for time with those in your inner circle. Set reasonable expectations for work time. Although ministry often feels like a job 24 hours a day, it is important to adapt and take adequate time for meals and spiritual, physical, and emotional renewal. The old saying says it best: "You cannot pour water from an empty pitcher."
- Insist the pastor take a vacation the first summer. Taking time to renew and replenish will allow him or her to pastor the church better than if he or she were to work straight through the summer. The pastor's family will appreciate some family time being honored as well. A new year in a new place is always better with some time away.

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Newsletter and Newspaper Publicity

Identify A News Story

Consider what may be unique to your story. If you are announcing your church's new minister, find an angle to the story—perhaps this is the first woman clergy to serve in your community, or maybe your new pastor has an interest in clown ministry, or perhaps your new pastor has recently written a book. Keep in mind that the news media exist to report news, not to publicize your church event.

To help you understand what the media does and does not consider news, here are some generalizations:

It is News When:

- Has never been done before.
- Addresses community concerns.
- Ties in with news events of the day.
- Is novel or has an unusual twist.
- Relates to a well-known person.
- Affects a large number of people directly.
- Helps the community.
- Was considered confidential but is now public.
- Pertains to the future.
- Is humorous, romantic, or entertaining.
- Pertains to children or the elderly.

News Releases

Composing a News Release

- *In writing a news release answer these questions:*
Who is the subject?
What is the story about?
When is the event scheduled to take place?
Where is it happening?
Why is it occurring?
How is it being accomplished?
- *Keep the news releases timely.* Mail or hand-deliver the release to the newspaper city editor one to two weeks before the event. Include a photograph and cut-line, if possible.

News Release Format

- Type news releases double-spaced on church letterhead, using only one page.
- Begin the text or copy about one-third of the way down the page to leave room for an editor to write a headline or make other changes.
- Center the word “END” at the bottom of the page to let the editor know the news release has ended.
- Center the word “MORE” at the bottom of the first page if a news release is more than one page long, and center the word “END” at the end of the last page. Staple the pages together.
- Be sure important information is in the first paragraph. Editors usually cut news releases from the bottom up.

Release Dates

Mark the release “Immediate” unless the information obviously warrants being held until a certain date.

Headlines

Do not indicate headlines. Editors write those. Leave at least three inches between the release line and the copy so the editor can insert the desired headline.

Reproduction

Make sure copies are sharp and clean. Use a good photocopy machine or a quality printer.

Timing

For weekly newspapers, mail releases one to two weeks in advance. Visit daily newspapers about 10 days in advance. Call print reporters to learn their deadlines so you can meet with the reporters at a convenient time.

Other Pointers

For special news, bypass the newspaper city editor for the appropriate section editor, such as the one for religion, business, or family living. For developments that merit staff coverage, send editors and news directors comprehensive fact sheets or advisory notices. Get to know your media contacts!

Good Photos Guide

- *Action, action, action!* Show action whenever possible. Be creative and tell a story with each image. Look for interesting camera angles. Avoid “grip and grins” (handshaking with two smiling people).
- *Shoot a story!* Instead of shooting a picture of the pastor holding a going away gift, reveal the reason he or she earned the award or why the award ceremony was held.
- *Always shoot at least two shots—each a little different.* Inform your subject that you will be taking more than one photograph.
- *Choose three or four designated photographers.* Have them take time to read the owner’s manual and become familiar with the limitations and special features of the camera, such as focus lock, flash or no flash, time lapse and low light enhancements. Keep extra rolls of film and extra batteries with the camera so you are always ready to take a picture.
- *Have “stock press photos” on file for all church staff members and leaders.* These photos need to be shot at the same time to ensure consistency in the quality, lighting, and style of dress. Take the pictures during an event at the church when most of the people can be together. Let them know in advance you will be taking their pictures.
- *Keep up with the times!* Modern “auto focus/auto flash” point-and-shoot cameras are hard to beat for consistently good photographs. Consider purchasing a “church” camera and keeping it in a safe but accessible place. Use a camera with a moderate zoom lens and ability to focus within three feet for portrait shots.
- *Choose a fast film* with a speed of 400 ASA for indoor or low light situations or movement. Use 100 ASA film for bright environments, such as outdoors or close-ups with lighting. A good compromise for all situations is 200 ASA speed film. Color film will reproduce well for print media, but it must be in focus and with contrast between light and dark areas.
- *Fill the viewfinder*—what you see is what you get! Avoid shooting someone head-to-toe unless it is to make a fashion statement. Portrait shots start about the middle of the chest to the top of the head. For family and small group photos, ask the people to crowd closely. Have small children held, or ask adults to either kneel or sit so all the heads are close together.
- *Avoid large group photos* of more than six adults unless activity defines the intent of the photo.
- *Avoid distracting activities or backgrounds* such as plants or poles—which might seem to grow out of the people’s heads. If you are using a wall for a background, ask your subject to stand at least six feet away from it to avoid shadows.
- *Aim for an even, solid background* by shooting the subject against a blue sky and holding the camera a little below eye level. Avoid trees and overhead utility wires.
- *Look for contrast.* Watch that clothing does not blend into the background.
- *Avoid shadows* across a person’s face.

Newsletter & Newspaper Publicity

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Good Grief

Grief Defined

Grief is a process inherent in transition or change. Any pastoral change and move will bring on feelings of grief and loss among the pastor and family, church congregation, and community. Understanding how grief may feel to us and how it may express itself in our lives may help us cope with the emotions we will experience. Regardless of whether or not the church has anticipated a change of pastors, the reality and finality of a change often produces a flurry of unexpected emotion from parishioners. Grief is always more than sorrow. It is the raw feelings at the center of the whole process that engages the person in adjusting to changed circumstances. Feelings include the deep fears of the mourner, prospects for loneliness, and the obstacles a person must face as she or he finds a new way of living.

Types of Grief

Preparatory Grief: Sometimes referred to as “anticipatory grief,” i.e., “in anticipation of an event which means loss/separation.” Preparatory grief references the possibility of an event—a move—that is likely to be known early in the process only by the pastor, pastor’s family, Staff Parish Relations Committee, District Superintendent, and Bishop. It is a time of “wondering” if it will happen and if so, what it will be like if and when it does happen.

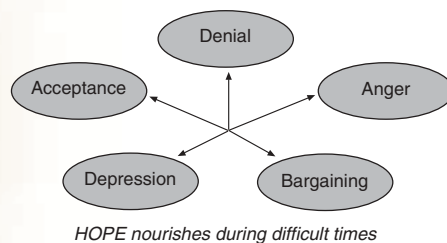
Intense Grief: An announcement of the event “expected to happen” has occurred. That means loss/separation begins to occur, and the pastor, pastor’s family, and parishioners’ behavior is affected by event. There may be open expression of thoughts and feelings, which may be positive or negative or of mixed emotions. There may be withdrawal and avoidance as one begins the “grief process” and feelings begin to intensify.

Acute Grief: Experienced during the short time before and after the event of loss/separation. Most all experiences are for a last or first time, i.e., the last Council on Ministries meeting, last baptism, last worship service, or the first worship service, first meetings. This time and experience is unique in that it overlaps the time before and after the move.

Subsequent Grief: The experience of “mourning” that follows the event of loss/separation. “Mourning” refers to a process of recovery and adjustment to the loss of significant relationships/experiences in one’s life. “Mourning” is a time of regaining control of and stability in emotions. This is an experience of “bringing to closure,” of letting go of what has been and welcoming what is to be.

Grief Work: The “work of grieving” any and all dynamics that inhibit or facilitate those experiences which make for grief resolution. Much has been written about the levels of grief, grief trajectories, stages of grief, grief states, and more; all of which could help explain grief related to moving. For purposes here, grief expert Elisabeth Kubler-Ross’ stages of grief are helpful to provide some understanding of how grief around a pastoral change/move may show up in your own life.¹

The Stages of Grief: Our Coping Mechanisms



Denial: Characterized by words such as, “It’s not true. There must be some mistake!” Even when the pastor or church has requested the move, some of the dynamic of denial prevails, i.e., “Is this really happening?” “Is this real or a dream (or nightmare!)?”

Anger: Characterized by words such as, “Why me?” “How could this be happening?” Even when a move has been requested, anger is often present in the form of: “How come it had to happen this way?” “Why couldn’t something be done to make it different or better?”

Parishioners may express their denial by verbalizing upset toward the pastor who is leaving, the Staff Parish Relations Committee, the District Superintendent, the Bishop, or even the newly appointed pastor.

Bargaining: Characterized by words such as, “Yes, me, but...” This stage involves the attempt to postpone in our mind the inevitable and may include bargaining with God and with each other. There may be “wishful thinking,” i.e., “If only that (some experience of support) could have happened before, this wouldn’t be happening.” Or it might be expressed as, “If only I had...” “If only I had handled this differently or done that another way, the pastor wouldn’t need to move now.” Sometimes, as parishioners, we may feel guilt over our role in things we believe contributed to the move being announced, and we may attempt to bargain in hopes of trying to “fix” things.

Depression: Characterized by phrases such as, “Yes, me.” “It really is happening,” and strong feelings of sadness, despair, sense of helplessness, i.e., “It’s all going to happen no matter what I do.” This stage is likely to occur even when people are faced with a change that is positive and perhaps even exciting as well as with a change that is sad and brings clear feelings of loss.

Acceptance: Characterized by words such as, “Yes, me. It’s a real part of life.” This is the time when we have come to terms with the reality of our situation—the reality of saying goodbye in order to say hello.

Although it is not one of the five stages of grief, Kubler-Ross also speaks to the power of

Hope: Characterized by the words, “I hope...” and that hope changes as each of the above stages is experienced. At first it may be, “I hope there will not be too much fuss about it,” and, “I hope our last week together can be joyful and we can celebrate.” Hope is the ability to focus on the possibilities of what may be—either for the future or for the present. Hope is what nourishes us in times of stress or when we are unsettled because we do not know precisely what the future may hold for us.

Coping with Grief

Reminders about Good Grief

- The experience is cyclical and goes back and forth, in and out of the various stages.
- It is not a step process in which the grief work is complete when one arrives at acceptance.
- It is worth remembering that family members, parishioners of all ages, and community persons will have similar experiences, and “where three or four are gathered together,” there may well be a mix of feelings, i.e., some people who are angry, others who are depressed, and others yet who are acceptant. Expect the congregation to exhibit a full range of emotions about a transition in pastoral leadership.
- When we face life-shaking losses, we are graced with the chance to recognize the One who truly is our strength. If we embrace our grief challenges with God’s guidance, God can stretch us to new heights. The ultimate, best, most desirable outcome of grief work is growth. Pastors have become a part of our families, and so, when they leave, it is often like losing a family member.
- Grief or loss usually connects us to other times in our lives when we experienced loss, and therefore our emotions become intensified. Pay attention to old losses this move may have “kicked up” for you. The losses may be from different parts of your life—everything from disappointments you experienced to family milestones (children leaving for kindergarten, college, or independent living), or divorce and death of loved ones, or an earlier change of pastors.
- A significant loss, such as a pastoral move, can bring up feelings—good and bad—from one’s repertoire of previous losses. Think of a chain. Consider the individual links of the chain as representing one’s life losses. A chain of links representing losses that have been processed to healthy resolution can provide strength to the person with that chain of losses. A healthy chain can anchor the person who is grieving in a new storm in life. The chain links can be a reference point of wisdom, hope, and comfort. Conversely, a chain of losses with links of unresolved grief can act as a chain of bondage to past losses, hindering or even preventing healthy grief resolution and transition.
- It is natural to question God. Doubt, fear, anger, and confusion are very present with loss. God can handle our questions and our emotions, including our anger. God invites our conversation: “*Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:6-7).
- How we experience grief can be compared to the waves of the ocean in that we cannot always anticipate how strong or how gentle each wave may be. During this ongoing process of letting go and moving forward, our emotions may be unpredictable to us.
- Remember the value of tears. H. Norman Wright writes in *Recovering from the Losses of Life*: “*Tears are the vehicle with which God has equipped us to express the deepest feelings words cannot express. We summon tears when in our weakness we cannot find words to express the deep emotions that we feel. Tears can express everything from jubilation to devastation. When words fail us, tears step in to help.*”²
- When members of the church family do not share our experience or understand our feelings—because of individual differences—stress in the grieving process can be greatly exacerbated. Appreciate and allow for individual styles and timing as members of our personal family and church family process their own grief. This will prevent additional stress and unnecessary pressure. Be careful not to shame members of your own family or church family who may not work through their grief as quickly as others.



Grief Resolution

Grief resolution is the entire experience of grief from the time the pastor, pastor's family, Staff Parish Relations Committee, District Superintendent, and Bishop know of the possibility of a move until the "settling in" and "peaceful acceptance" has been experienced in the new environment.

- Resolution will always occur when openness, honesty, and courage are present.
- Grieving a loss (mourning) is the expression of grief. It is a *process*. Grief work takes time and energy. Do not expect everyone around you to deal with grief as you might. We are all unique in this process.
- The *less* openness, honesty, and courage present, the greater the likelihood of "unresolved grief," i.e., anger that did not get resolved, some experience that was neglected or ignored.
- The *more* attention given to genuine expression of appropriate thought/feeling concerning the move, the healthier the grief process and the greater likelihood of "healthy closure."
- The more intentional we are to "grieving well," the more positive the transition will be for everyone involved, including the new pastor and the congregation.
- We should consider a prayerful partnership. Be encouraged by and encourage the prayerful partnership of all involved in the move and the grieving process surrounding the change. Not only are the Bishop, District Superintendent, Staff Parish Relations Committee, congregation, and pastoral family involved in the move, but God is also central in the whole plan, purpose, and process: "*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope*" (Jeremiah 29.11).
- Even when we work to allow resolution, one hundred percent resolution or absolute closure is not likely to happen. We all are likely to have some "unfinished business" due to a circumstance or situation.
- In your grief, recognize your busyness is an attempt to avoid dealing with the loss you feel. Be mindful of your grief.
- Healing from a loss or significant change requires time and compassion. Try to be patient with yourself and those around you. Grief is a normal, appropriate response to loss. It is unique to the person experiencing it. There is no set timetable for its completion.
- No shortcuts exist for working through our feelings of loss. Trust the process of healing.

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²Wright, H. Norman. *Recovering from the Losses of Life*. Nashville, TN, Lifeway Press, 1998

Books to Consider

Praying Our Goodbyes by Joyce Rupp. Ivy Books, 1992.

The Grief Recovery Handbook by John W. James and Russell Friedman. Harpercollins, 1998.

Making the Change

Adjusting to a Pastoral Transition

Many ways exist to cope with grief; some may work for one person but do not work for another person. Determining what works for you becomes critically important. Although similarities of expressions of joy or anger may be present among persons, each person's own expression of anger is individual and unique. It helps to identify your own "usual way" of expressing such feelings, and through that style, express the grief as fully as possible. You may want to attempt some new ways as a method for growing more in your understanding and skills.

Most critical is to "share the grief" with others. Initially, it may be with a close friend or your spouse or District Superintendent or one or two select Staff Parish Relations Committee persons. Sharing enables expression rather than suppression (and perhaps depression) to occur. When the move is announced, more open sharing is not only permitted but also encouraged! Special experiences—both positive and negative or joyful and painful—can be recalled and shared. Consider this story: A pastor had been at a church for a number of years, and it had been announced for a week that the pastor would be moving in June. A woman, a long-time member, approached the pastor and said, "A lot of good things have happened while you were here (and she named a couple). I am sad to see you leaving." The pastor responded, "Oh, I'll be around for a while yet," and changed the subject. As a result, neither the parishioner nor the pastor had full expression of genuine feelings.

Managing Emotions and Tasks

- **Keep a journal** and a commitment to make at least one entry a day that is at least one sentence long. If you wish to include a longer entry, do so. Journaling is especially helpful in the early days and weeks as there are limits to the number of persons with whom sad or uncertain feelings can be shared. Later, as the move date approaches, your focus may shift to some special happenings you want to be sure to remember and so note in your journal. After your new pastor arrives, it helps to record special experiences to allow expression of special feelings as your trust is still developing.
- **Make a list and schedule of what you feel needs to be completed with the help of church leadership before the pastor leaves:** church records all in order, parsonage repairs and cleaning to be done before the new pastor arrives, transition of insurance or other Conference responsibilities, time to celebrate the ministry history and the pastoral family and to plan for welcoming the incoming pastoral family. Make plans for how to be supportive. Remember pastors are on a tight turnaround when moving and they need you to help assure all goes well as they exit and as you welcome.
- **Develop a support group of people willing to focus on grief.**
- **Make a list of people in your support network you can call upon.** Think about the different friends and family you might call upon, depending on what you need. Some friends might be better with a tearful day while others might be more helpful with making a list of what you need to get done. Having a list of people and asking for the support of others before your moment of need helps to make it easier for you to pick up the phone and ask for support when you do need it. Although it is appropriate to share your grief with your pastor, be certain to temper your sharing. The pastor has an entire congregation of caring people and care should be given not to overload him or her with your grief. Build a network of other appropriate people with whom you can process your feelings.
- **Be aware of the pain you are all feeling** brought about by the change in appointment. When people share various experiences of life together, they develop what we call relationships. Generally, the more experiences shared, the deeper the relationships become. A longer duration of time may also deepen the relationships we have with one another. Pastors and parishioners share in some of the deepest experiences of life, such as birth, marriage, illness, and death. A number of those experiences may be shared over a prolonged period of time, and thus the relationships between pastors and parishioners become a matter of very deep and profound feelings. We cannot go through change in our relationships without pain. This is true for us all: pastors, the families of pastors, and congregations.
- **Plan for extra spiritual and emotional self-care at this time.**
- **Plan for regularly scheduled meetings of church leadership groups like the Staff Parish Relations Committee** to discuss what is happening and how everyone is feeling. The time surrounding a move is tough and is a vulnerable time for everyone. Providing a built-in time for sharing will help prevent a build up of unexpressed emotion.
- **Cooperate with and assist your pastor** as you prepare farewell events. Let him or her know your preferences (reasonable ones!). It is not fair to either of you to plan a time or an event that does not work for you. Let the pastor know your feelings while also respecting his or her feelings.

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- **Allow love to prevail.** The relationship we have with anyone is unique. No two relationships are the same. In the past, our experiences with parents, grandparents, teachers, friends, schoolmates, and ministers have nurtured many deep relationships. The actual setting of those experiences may have been years ago, yet they are still a vital part of our lives, sustaining us by the memories of those wonderful relationships. And yet, we must be willing to develop new relationships in the ever-changing experiences of life. We need to bear all things within the framework of love.
- **Love bears all things.**
Believes all things.
Hopes all things.
Endures all things.
Love never ends (I Corinthians 13.7-8).
- **Write a hymn or song that expresses your feelings.**
- **Keep a time for meditation/reflection.**
- **Exercise additional prayer.** Any sudden change we encounter in life needs to be under-girded with extra prayer. Many people are unable to cope with change because they have not learned to put the matter into the care of a loving God.
- **Cry, scream, and laugh as “fitting.”**

Lessons to Remember

- Change is usually not easy to handle. We need to spend time processing the change and all its pros and cons: real, possible, and imagined.
- God is still in control of your life even in the midst of chaos, even if you cannot feel God’s presence.
- “Do not borrow trouble from tomorrow.” Anticipated troubles often do not occur, waste precious energy, and fill one’s mind with negative thoughts.
- Live for today. Sometimes keeping our focus on what is immediately in front of us will nourish us and prevent overload. Dwelling on events planned for six, three, or even one month later can sometimes cause us to become overwhelmed and to lose our deep sense of peace. Keeping our focus does not mean we deny or do not deal with the future or what requires our attention. It does mean we do not get lost in the future and miss out on today.
- Allow yourself to be overwhelmed by grace. Recognize the vast love God has for you. God uses your friends, acquaintances, and church members as a portrayal of God’s love. Be open and gladly receive the offers of friends. Allow yourself to be vulnerable. It takes too much energy to hide from your feelings and needs. Allow yourself to be lifted up by prayer.
- Allow friends to help you. Let them know what your needs are. It may take an attitude adjustment to “receive” gracefully. For some of us, the proverb, “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” is so ingrained that receiving gracefully is a difficult adjustment. Learning to receive from others also allows us to receive gracefully from God.

Books to Consider

Kitchen Table Wisdom, Stories that Heal by Rachel Naomi Remen, MD. Riverhead, 1997.
Gift of the Red Bird, A Spiritual Encounter by Paula D’Arcy. Crossroad, 1996.
Gold in Your Memories, Sacred Moment, Glimpses of God by Macrina Weiderkehr. Ave Maria, 1998.

Transition Strategies for Lay Leadership

Provide opportunities to acknowledge the change. Some congregations would prefer to move along as if nothing is changing. That kind of avoidance does not permit feelings such as grief and love to be expressed. As a church leader, be active in helping your congregation grieve well.

Prepare the congregation for the transition. Support your pastor in utilizing some of his or her remaining time to recall some of the high points of his or her tenure of ministry. But care must be exercised not to get into setting an agenda for the new pastor who will be coming on the scene in the near future. A new pastor will bring his or her own ideas and visions which will be woven together with the ideas and visions of the church leadership.

Making the Change

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Share in a positive way the need for good ministerial etiquette regarding your pastor's involvement in the life of your church after leaving this appointment. Affirm the ways your pastor has touched your life and you have touched his or hers while being clear that the departing pastor will *not* return to the church for visits, weddings, funerals, or other events the parishioners might want and expect the pastor to participate in. If church leadership is clear about the policy and spends some time educating the congregation by publicly addressing this issue—including placing notes in the bulletin and newsletter—then all involved will be prepared to make a place in their hearts and their church for the new pastor, and hurt feelings will be prevented.

Be constructive in answering the often-asked question: “Why is the pastor leaving us?” As a member of The United Methodist Church, you know that pastors will be moving from one appointment to another. This is the rule and not the exception. Church leadership needs to be *constructive*, not *destructive* in the ministerial experience of a pastoral change or transition. When the leadership of the church responds in a positive and affirming way, other parishioners are allowed to embrace the change even while experiencing the very real loss.

During the transition, ask yourself a simple question: “What should you as a church leader do to prepare for the new pastor before he or she arrives in your church?” “What should the congregation do to prepare for the new pastor before he or she arrives in your church?”

How a pastor leaves the church he or she has been serving can either set that church back years or provide for an ongoing positive environment for the new pastor and congregation to join in ministry together. Evaluate and plan how you can intentionally and actively support how your pastor leaves your church. How a leader leaves remains a legacy to the church and its leadership forever. Seek to help your pastor leave well. Remember the pastor needs to have the opportunity to spend the time remaining more with people and less with paper. Plan to utilize church leadership and membership to lighten the load by creating teams to help with tasks like updating membership roles, making lists of homebound members, and helping to facilitate the ministry of the incoming pastor.

Keeping the Faith

Focus on the positive attributes and contributions of the coming and departing pastors. As a church leader, remember that sometimes parishioners will need a listening ear rather than a response. As a church leader, clearly discourage gossip; it is destructive to the life of God's church.

Avoid the temptation to compare the new pastor to the old one. All people, including pastors, have their own personalities and histories. Pastors need to feel they have your full attention and are seen and heard for who they actually are and not seen in comparison to other pastors.

Graciously affirm your pastor. This is a time of great change and transition and a time to build up one another in Christ.

Affirm the new pastor who has been appointed to your church. Do not neglect to express your gratitude to him or her. Build joy and love into your relationship together. Remember we all want to be loved and liked. Even on those days when you may be missing and longing for the familiar pastoral family you had or your new pastor may be longing for his or her old community and parishioners, remember you both want and need to be loved for who you are.

Listen. In this process, you can discover who this new pastor is and what his or her needs are. What is it he or she wants to tell you?

Remember the new pastor and the departing pastor in your private prayers and the church community's prayers.

*Seek to help
your pastor
leave well*



Books to Consider

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Publishing House.
Saying Goodbye, A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors by Edward A. White. Alban, 1990.
Ending Well, Starting Strong: Your Personal Pastorate Start-Up Workshop by Roy M. Oswald.
Alban, 1995. (Six Audiocassettes.)



Worship Resources

Leaving Liturgies

The congregation/worship committee may wish to write its own litany of farewell and have a representative come forward with a gift for the minister. Hymns from *The United Methodist Hymnal* may include #673, 672, 670, 666, 664, 582, 557, 436, 396, 382. Instrumentalists may wish to respond to the blessing with #665. *The United Methodist Book of Worship* also has suggestions for liturgy and hymns on pages 598-599.

Included here are several litany choices which could be used by a lay leader or SPRC chair at the end of the service. These may be accompanied by a gift-giving moment afterward, if appropriate.

Leader: We gather together as one community,
PEOPLE: A PART OF ONE UNIVERSAL CHURCH.
Leader: We gather together this day of farewell,
PEOPLE: A PART OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST JESUS.
Leader: We gather to call forth God's love,
PEOPLE: FOR EACH ONE HERE AND FOR ONE WHO MOVES ONWARD.
Leader: Thanks be to God for our leader.
PEOPLE: AND ALL THE GIFTS S/HE HAS SHARED.
Leader: Our love goes with <Name>,
PEOPLE: AS WE ALL LOOK FORWARD TO A NEW FUTURE.
Leader: Go in peace to love and serve our God.
Minister: I shall serve our God faithfully while remembering you always.
Prayer of blessing for minister by leader. Gift, if appropriate. Closing hymn.

d

Leader: The wind of the Spirit blows in this place.
PEOPLE: MAY THE FIRE OF THE SPIRIT CLEANSE US:
Leader: from regret, from fear, from pain,
PEOPLE: FROM SORROW, FROM ANGER, FROM RESISTANCE.
Leader: May the healing of the Spirit be upon us.
PEOPLE: MAY THE STRENGTH OF THE SPIRIT GO WITH US,
Leader: and with <Name> who leaves us.
PEOPLE: GO WITH OUR BLESSING.
WE SHALL LIFT YOU IN PRAYER.
WE SHALL REMEMBER YOU.
WE SHALL CALL FOR GOD'S BLESSING UPON YOU,
THIS DAY AND FOREVERMORE.
ALL: AMEN AND AMEN.

Prayer of blessing for minister by leader. Gift, if appropriate. Closing hymn.

d

Leader: We remember.
PEOPLE: WE REMEMBER.
Leader: We remember our time together,
PEOPLE: OUR JOYS AND SORROWS,
Leader: our laughter and anger.
PEOPLE: WE REMEMBER.
Leader: We remember:
PEOPLE: THE WEDDINGS AND BAPTISMS,
Leader: the illnesses and funerals,
PEOPLE: AND WE ARE GRATEFUL TO BE CALLED CHRIST'S COMMUNITY.
Leader: And we are grateful for the gifts <Name> has brought to us.
ALL: THANKS BE TO GOD FOR THE TIME OF BLESSING WE
SHARED, AND THE TIME OF BLESSING TO COME.

Prayer of blessing for minister by leader. Gift, if appropriate. Closing hymn.

Welcoming Liturgies

The church may wish to use the liturgy available in *The United Methodist Book of Worship* on pages 595-598. Hymns from *The United Methodist Hymnal* may include #334, 383, 399, 413, 557, 578, 733. Listed in the *Book of Worship* are the symbols of welcome—Bible, water, bread and cup, hymnal, *The Discipline*, globe and stole if appropriate. Any of these symbols or a particular symbol of the local church may be used with a litany of welcome.

Included here are several litany choices which could be used by a lay leader or SPRC chair at the beginning of the service. These may be accompanied by a symbol-giving moment, if appropriate.

Leader: This is a day of thanksgiving!

PEOPLE: THANKS BE TO GOD!

Leader: We are renewed in this place of worship.

PEOPLE: WE CALL FORTH GOD'S SPIRIT.

Leader: We welcome a new leader in our midst.

PEOPLE: WELCOME, <Name>!

Leader: This is a day of new beginnings.

PEOPLE: WE REJOICE AND ARE GLAD IN IT.

Leader: We are glad to have you among us:

to speak and to listen,
to serve and to baptize,
to help and hold,
to lead and guide.

Minister: I am here, filled with hope:

to know you,
to share with you,
to find our way together on the journey.

ALL: THANKS BE TO GOD!

The liturgy of symbols may be used here: page 597, BOW. Prayer led by lay leader or SPR chair. Hymn. Continue with order of service.

d

Leader: God welcomes us in this sanctuary!

PEOPLE: WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD IN THIS HOLY SPACE!

Leader: Today, we celebrate a new <one/family> amongst us!

PEOPLE: WELCOME, IN THE NAME OF CHRIST!

Leader: Welcome, as our leader and spiritual guide.

PEOPLE: WELCOME, AS OUR COMFORTER AND SHEPHERD.

Leader: Welcome, as our prophet and preacher.

PEOPLE: WELCOME, AS ONE OF US IN THIS COMMUNITY OF CHRIST.

Leader: <Name>, we are grateful for your presence here.

PEOPLE: AND WE FEEL BLESSED TO BE WITH YOU.

Leader: Let us celebrate God's name!

PEOPLE: THANKS BE TO GOD!

The liturgy of symbols may be used here: page 597, BOW. Prayer led by lay leader or SPR chair. Hymn. Continue with order of service.

d

Leader: In the name of Christ,

PEOPLE: WE GIVE OUR THANKS AND PRAISE.

Leader: We call on God to bless this community,

PEOPLE: AND ALL WHO LEAD IT.

Leader: Instill in our new leader all the gifts and graces for ministry in this place.

PEOPLE: INSTILL IN US THE DESIRE TO BE IN MINISTRY TOGETHER.

Leader: God has done a marvelous thing.

PEOPLE: AND WE ARE BLESSED IN IT!

ALL: THANKS BE TO THE HOLY ONE, NOW AND FOREVER! AMEN.

The liturgy of symbols may be used here: page 597, BOW. Prayer led by lay leader or SPR chair. Hymn. Continue with order of service.

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Transitions/Change Liturgies

UMH Hymns may include #131, 374, 377, 380, 398, 405, 430, 451, 454, 580. An instrumentalist may introduce the service with dissonant music or simple noise. This sound may be followed by the liturgist calling people to worship in a time of transition/change. After an opening hymn, sung together, the rest of the service proceeds, and at the end, the instrumentalist makes the same dissonant sound and leads to either a quiet or melodious conclusion, signifying that all will be well.

Included here are several litany choices which may be used by a lay leader, liturgist, or SPRC chair at the beginning of the service.

Leader: 'Tis a day of transition.

PEOPLE: WE GATHER NONETHELESS.

Leader: We gather to praise God,

PEOPLE: AND ALL GOD'S SERVANTS.

Leader: We wait upon the Great One.

PEOPLE: WE RENEW OUR FAITH.

Leader: Even in times of wilderness wandering,

PEOPLE: WE SHALL BE STRONG.

WE SHALL NOT STRAY.

WE SHALL AWAIT A NEW DAY.

Leader: God bless the journey!

PEOPLE: WE FOLLOW GOD FAITHFULLY!

d

Leader: How is it with your soul?

PEOPLE: OUR SOULS ARE TROUBLED,

Leader: for we are in a time of change.

PEOPLE: AND CHANGE DOES NOT COME EASILY.

Leader: We call upon God to bring us peace.

PEOPLE: MAY GOD'S PEACE BE WITH US ALL.

Leader: For in change, lies opportunity,

PEOPLE: AND IN OPPORTUNITY LIES HOPE.

Leader: Fill our souls with hope, O God,

PEOPLE: AND CALL FORTH THE BEST THAT IS WITHIN US.

Leader: Bring to us the one who bears your will,

PEOPLE: AND GRANT US YOUR CONSTANT LOVE.

ALL: AMEN.

d

Leader: Our God is magnificent!

PEOPLE: GOD PROVIDES ALL THINGS!

Leader: From manna in the wilderness,

PEOPLE: TO BREAD AND GRAPE FOR THE THIRSTING.

Leader: As a shepherd, God leads us.

PEOPLE: AS A MOTHER HEN, GOD PROTECTS US.

Leader: God will stand by us all,

PEOPLE: AND WE WILL KNOW GOD'S LOVE!

Yoke Of Christ Liturgy

A Service Of Sending Forth

Let the pastor and lay leaders meet at the altar.

Pastor: This stole is a symbol of the yoke of Christ. I have worn it for the past [number of years served at the church]. It represents our covenant as pastor and people together. Sometimes it has been heavy, but God's all sufficient grace has lightened the burdens and brought peace. Today, I lay aside this yoke of Christ's service at [name of church the pastor is leaving] to take up the task of ministry among God's people at [name of the church pastor will be going to].

Lay Leaders: We receive this stole as a symbol of your ministry among us. Placing it upon the altar, we send you forth to serve Christ in your new calling.

Pastor: May the Lord watch between us while we are absent from one another. And the blessings of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with us all.

PEOPLE: AMEN!

UMH Hymn #557 Blest Be The Tie That Binds

A Service Of Reception

This provides the opportunity for the participation of laypersons.

Layperson: The stole on the altar today is a symbol of the yoke of Christ. For the past [number of years served at previous church], you wore it in Christ's service at [name of church pastor has left]. Last week it was placed on the altar and consecrated for ministry here at [name of church pastor is beginning a ministry].

Associate Pastor or Layperson: This stole represents our covenant to serve Christ together. Today we covenant to work side by side, sharing the burdens of this congregation.

Layperson: We place this stole upon your shoulders as a symbol of our ministry together as pastor and people in the service of Christ.

Pastor: I accept this stole and will wear it as a symbol of our covenant to serve Christ together. Sometimes the burdens will be heavy and the forward strides seem small. We will not always meet each other's expectations. But, we are bound together with Christ. His yoke is easy. His burden is light. I ask for your prayers, and I promise my love and faithfulness.

PEOPLE: WE WILL SHARE THE YOKE OF CHRIST WITH YOU. AS WE VENTURE FORTH IN CHRIST'S SERVICE, WE PLEDGE YOU OUR LOVE AND SPIRITUAL SUPPORT.

ALL: AMEN!

UMH Hymn #557 Blest Be The Tie That Binds

Books to Consider

The Iona Community Worship Book. Wildgoose 1994. Glasgow, Scotland. (Available through Cokesbury.)

Taste and See by Jacqueline Syrup Bergan and S. Marie Schwan. St. Mary's Press, 1996.

Touch Holiness by Ruth Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi. Pilgrim Press, 1990.

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A Systems Perspective on Moving

The study of family systems is a study of the processes of human interaction. While this field of inquiry began by studying nuclear families, the observations and insights have helped many to understand the dynamics that occur in any group or human community. The church is a human community, and as the body of Christ, we are a family of believers who find our unity in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Remembering how people and church families tend to function in a group (i.e., system) can help us through the chaotic time of a move. People under extreme stress are more likely to respond with reactive responses rather than with prayerful, purposeful responses. Paying attention to the family systems dynamics may help us gain some distance and objectivity and may ultimately help us become more purposeful in what we say and do for the glory of God.

Leaving and Entering a Congregation

The Significance Of Separation Processes

Ceremonies marking the end of a given clergy-congregational relationship are often more important for the future of the congregation



The idea that once a pastoral move is announced the pastor and church leaders enter a *Lame Duck* period is a myth, and according to Edwin Friedman in Chapter 10 of his book, *Generation to Generation*, it is, to say the very least, also short-sighted.¹ The change of a pastoral leader is one of the most emotionally charged events any church family endures. The nature of the separation between pastor and congregation can have more lasting effects in that congregation than all the previous years of effort to build and shape the faith within that church family. How a pastor functions through the leaving process may make a more lasting witness to his or her faith and gospel proclamation than all his or her passionately preached messages from the pulpit. For both pastors and leaders, leaving is a time to walk the walk more than talk the talk. It is a time to convert the deepest felt beliefs into a guard for our tongues and a guide for our actions.

During the time of transition, the Staff Parish Relations Committee, the pastor, District Superintendent, and Bishop are all subject to endless triangulations. They are constantly being pulled to balance all the voices and expressed needs of the local and larger church system. Using the concept of an emotional triangle helps to bring some objectivity to the emotional processes present in a change of leaders. In gaining objectivity about the emotional processes, we may find ourselves in a better place to control our reactivity and responses to the change.

Friedman suggests that ceremonies marking the end of a given clergy-congregational relationship are often more important for the future of the congregation than the ceremonies initiating the beginning of a new pastor-parish relationship.² Rituals, which publicly release the congregation from dependency upon the leaving pastor, significantly increase the ability of the congregation to move on under new leadership.

Dealing with Separation

A pastor-congregation separation in many ways has all the emotional processes of a marital divorce. The following are some coping strategies from a systems perspective.

Regulate your own emotional reactivity to others. The best thing you can do is to stay rooted and grounded in your spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, journaling, Bible study, etc. Those disciplines will help you find purposeful responses to all the emotional reactivity coming at you. The partner who did not initiate the separation will tend to be more reactive. It will be up to the initiating partner to be prepared for the reactivity and to regulate his or her own reactivity. Unregulated, the reactivity will escalate, deepening the pain of separation and leaving long-term wounds.

Permit reactivity in the other. Allow others to express their reactivity without the need to control what they say or the way they feel. This requires being present as opposed to fleeing or retreating because their reactivity is uncomfortable. The challenge is to be present but not add to the reactivity by forming a reactive feedback loop. If you can watch the fire burn without trying to put it out or throw gas on it, you will promote the other's ability to move on with the least amount of emotional baggage.

Engage actively in the transition process. Build a relationship with your District Superintendent, who is in the best position to communicate the needs of your congregation to the Bishop and the cabinet. Make sure your long-term and annual profiles are current and accurately describe your congregation. Make plans to celebrate the ministry of the departing pastor.

Stay in touch after the separation. While good pastoral etiquette suggests that pastors not return to their former parish for at least a year, contact between former pastors and parishioners is still likely. How we handle those contacts will promote separation or encourage unhealthy dependencies. It is inappropriate,

A Systems Perspective on Moving

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therefore, for your former pastor to function in any pastoral role, such as in weddings or funerals, with you. The continued contact, however, that fosters further separation involves detriangling and continued disengagement. This means you must avoid complaining about the new pastor with the former pastor. If we refuse to conspire in an emotional alliance with former pastors against their successors, we promote further separation, more effectively deal with our own grief, and generally promote health in the system.

Strategies for entering a congregational family. When a pastor moves into a new congregation, there are no guarantees his or her predecessors handled their leaving well. Two major variables affect the nature of the baggage your congregation may be carrying: a) the length of the congregation's "marriages" (the number of years pastors usually stay at your church), and b) the nature of the previous separations and how those "break-ups" were handled. The following are three strategies for pastors entering a congregation:

Work to integrate the new pastor into the existing relationship system without interfering or rearranging existing triangles. The model most applicable is that of a "blended family." In this situation, the new pastor marries into an established family relationship system. The one coming in "skates on thin ice" when he or she tries to fix or rearrange the relationship patterns that already exist. Expressing ideas or suggesting changes is one thing; but coming on as the fixer or the re-arranger is another. When a harmless suggestion from the new pastor results in a strong emotional reaction, the root of that reaction is most likely the threat of change to a pre-existing triangle in the relationship system.

Be wary of efforts by members of the congregation to triangle the new pastor with the departed pastor or with other members of the system. Friedman suggests all triangling remarks are residue from unresolved issues.³ They are attempts to get the pastor to take one or another side. A new relationship based upon "triangling out" a third party is based on a false intimacy. Remove the third party and the relationship dies. Triangling remarks about the congregation's "ex" partner are hard for a new pastor to resist because the remarks are usually presented in a manner that praises the new minister by comparison.

Work at creating opportunities for the new pastor to build as many direct one-to-one relationships as possible with key members of the "family." More than developing new programs, the new pastor needs to work at being grafted into the emotional processes of the body. Building one-to-one relationships will lay the foundation for a longer stay, lead to the greater chance that new programs will be accepted, and in the end, leave less residue when it comes time for the new pastor to leave.

Build on the past for the future. The process of entering a congregation is in many ways really a response to the residue of former separations. Many congregations are on the rebound and looking for a new partner whose qualities are the opposite of the former partner. The inference is the differences will somehow heal pain and solve problems. In fact, the changes that result from grafting these different qualities into the body bring a different kind of unexpected pain. From a family systems perspective, this means the nature of the new connections is primarily a function of the nature of the previous separations.

When a move is announced, you are in anything but a *Lame Duck* period. You are entering one of the most crucial and effective times of spiritual growth in your church family's ministry.

Triangles in a Pastoral Move

Family system theory suggests that triangles occur more frequently and with greater intensity when we are going through some kind of life stress. Since a pastoral move qualifies as significant stress, you may wish to think through some of the triangles with which you and your congregation might be confronted. An attempt will be made here to describe some of the common triangles, but this is by no means intended to be an exhaustive list nor is it absolute.

Basic Triangle Processes

Triangles are one of the basic processes of human emotional functioning. When God created more than two persons, the door was open for people to build alliances or to involve another person in the emotional interaction between two people. Triangle theory tries to take a step back in order to look at the way relationships between three persons interact and actually shift emotional energy from one relationship to another.

Triangles occur when the relationship between two people becomes anxious, conflicted, or uncomfortable. When this happens, a third party will be "triangled in" to ease the emotional intensity. This process operates automatically, often without conscious awareness or intent. It is a natural process that is descriptive of the way human beings operate in community.



Sometimes two people will set aside their discomfort with each other to help someone who is characterized as a “victim” and “needy,” or at other times, to defend against someone who is characterized as a “villain” and “a problem.” Another common formation of a triangle is when one person takes on the role of mediator, peacemaker, or fix-it person for the relationship between the other two.

The effect of every triangle is that one person’s behavior becomes a function of the relationship between the other two corners.

The following are some signs that you are in a triangle: You feel torn between the pull of others. You feel a conflict between two of your loyalties. Someone is reacting toward you in an extreme and excessive manner, far beyond what might be considered normal. You feel yourself pulled into gossip about the flaws of another. You feel the need to rescue someone. You come home and want to kick the dog because of some unpleasant happening in your day.

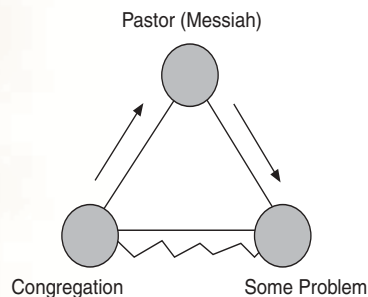
The goal of understanding triangle processes is to lift our level of functioning to an intentional and purposeful level. This means overcoming the pressures that the corners of the triangle place on you so you act in an intentional way rather than in a purely reactive, impulsive way. This is, in part, what being self-differentiated means. You are acting in a more self-differentiated way when you purposefully relate to each of the other two sides independently of their relationship with each other.

Another thing to note is that one corner of the triangle may be something other than a person. It may also be an idea, issues, or group of people. It may even be God. As a leader in your congregation, you may very well want to develop the spiritual art of “triangling” God into your relationships with others.

Finally, as neat as a three-sided relationship is, we must also be aware that a pure isolated triangle practically never exists. More likely, layers of triangles interlock with one another. Add a fourth or fifth person to the mix, and the possible triangles multiply rapidly, and the complexity of the system significantly.

The following are suggestions for possible triangles you may find yourself in as you move through a pastoral change.

The “Great Messiah” Triangle

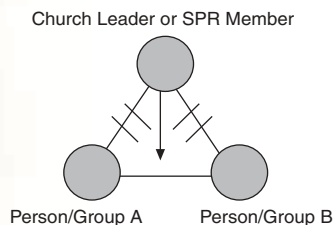


The seduction of this triangle within the Methodist system is that we tend to believe all our problems will be solved at the top by a change of leaders. The new pastor is greeted by the expectation and hope that he or she will be able to fix all the problems. Typical problems presented may include: low attendance, lack of visitation, a poor financial position, struggling Sunday school, etc.

It is healthy to realize that because of the homeostasis (the forces that keep things running the same way) a new pastor may not be able to fix a problem completely. Encouraging people within the church to take responsibility for the problem and working together as a team to fix it may produce more lasting change.

To manage your own reactivity in this triangle, think for a moment about how you are being manipulated by the fears the problem creates. Evaluate how you feel about the problem and what you are afraid of. Be aware of how the problem triggers anxiousness in you. Strive to avoid an impulsive response to the fears and anxiousness. Act with prayerful, purposeful intention.

The “Meddling” Triangle



In this triangle the invitation is to be the “fix-it” person. The problem is that you are invited to fix a relationship you are not in.

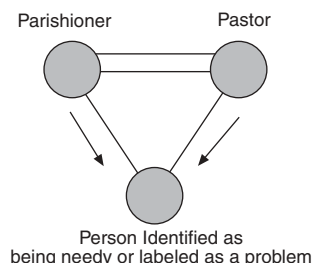
It is helpful to remember the basics of triangle processes. You can have a relationship with Person/Group A, and you can have a relationship with Person/Group B, but you cannot have the relationship *between* Person/Group A and Person/Group B. Give the responsibility for fixing the problem back to those who are in relationship with one another. Encourage the use of their spiritual resources for resolving the difficulty. You will function best when you stay focused on the relationships you are in and trust God to work in the relationships you are not in.

Frequently, when you try to fix a relationship you are not in, you find yourself pushed back or cut off from both persons/groups. Another result is that Person/Group A and Person/Group B may team up, set aside their problem, and make you the problem. In the latter scenario, you have fixed their problem with each

other by becoming a greater problem. Choose wisely: Do you want to solve a problem by becoming a greater problem in your congregation?

Acting in a self-differentiated way means not allowing your relationship with Person/Group A to affect your relationship with Person/Group B or vice versa. It means either purposefully becoming the problem that allows them to set aside their problem or refraining from fixing it and giving the problem back to them to fix.

The "Need for Closeness" Triangle

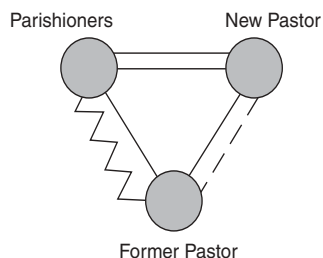


Sometimes the need for a pastor and parishioners to feel close with one another leads to the formation of a triangle. Here, teaming up to defend against someone or teaming up to help someone generates the closeness. A negative way of building closeness is to focus on a threat or an enemy of the body. This is a closeness built upon fear and sometimes generates paranoia. A positive way to build closeness is to focus on the mission of the church. This is a closeness built upon a common vision (or the hopes and dreams) people have for their church.

Remember closeness between two people built in the ways mentioned here will always require a third corner which may be a person or an issue. In some sense, it is a false closeness because it is dependent on a third party.

This triangle is not the only way to build closeness. Closeness may also be built through opportunities of playful fellowship. Consider how you will respond to the need to build closeness with your new pastor. Who or what are the enemies, visions, issues, or playtimes that will bring you together?

The "Former Pastor" Triangle

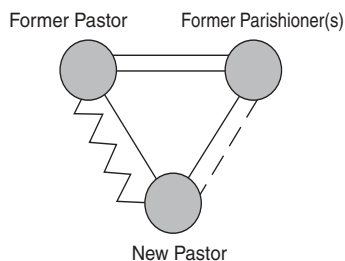


A particular example of the "Need for Closeness" triangle is that of building closeness at the expense of your former pastor. It is so tempting to share the flaws of your former pastor with your new pastor in an attempt to build closeness as well as to express the unmet needs within the congregation that you want your new pastor to fill.

Remember building closeness on this basis is dependent upon a third party. Once the former pastor becomes just a memory, the closeness dissipates.

One strategy for healthy leadership may be to substitute pastor-bashing with vision-casting. Resist being critical of your former pastor with your new pastor. Turn conversations from gossip about the past toward talk about your hopes and dreams for the future of your church.

The "Grieving Leaving" Triangle



Moving brings the grief of changing the person who fills the pastoral role within your congregation. We often form bonds of love and affection for that person because he or she is sometimes part of the most intimate transitions within our life journeys. There is no question that it is hard to let go of the person who has filled the pastoral role in our lives. It is also hard to welcome a new and different person into that role especially when the person has contrasting skills, gifts, and abilities.

However, the dynamics according to triangle processes are as follows: If your congregation remains dependent upon a former pastor by inviting him or her back for pastoral functions, you will deprive your new pastor of entry into that role. The results may include a rejection of the new pastor or at the very least a distant relationship. Further, you may also be promoting a conflict between pastoral colleagues.

Not keeping and promoting good pastoral role boundaries forces people into the uncomfortable position of having to choose between their loyalty to your new pastor and their loyalty to your former pastor.

A Systems Perspective on Moving

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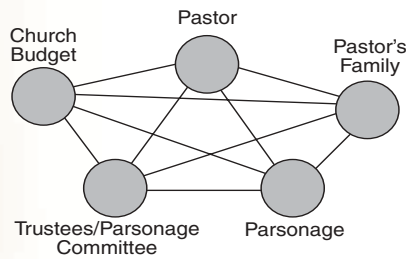
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The "Parsonage" Triangles

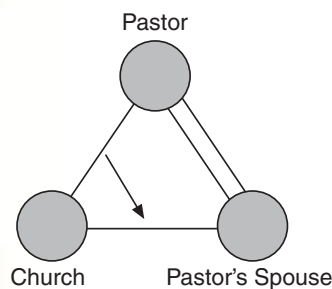


One of the more complex triangle systems in the church revolves around the pastor and the parsonage. As you can see by the diagram, the pastor must manage many interlocking triangles. There are at least eight interlocking triangles in the diagram.

In the case of interlocking triangles, issues in any one of the relationships may move quickly to another relationship. For example, it is possible that the emotional energy in the pastor's family relationship with the parsonage may move into the relationship the trustees have with the church budget.

Here, the new pastor stands in the middle, juggling and processing many competing values, i.e., the love and comfort of one's family, acceptable living conditions in the parsonage, sacrificing or compromising to please the Trustees/Parsonage Committee, and the commitment toward missions in the church budget. Church leaders can help to reduce the stress in the pastoral family by clarifying the importance of parsonage maintenance within the congregation.

The "Pastor's Love" Triangle



When a new pastor comes, parishioners and the pastor's family will be watching to see how the pastor balances his or her love for the church with love for family. Both will pull at the pastor with their requests for the pastor's time and attention.

Sometimes the pastor's spouse or children find themselves growing resentful of the church because of the relationship between the pastor and the church. This happens whether the relationship is good or bad. Often, pastors make sacrifices to accommodate the church that affect the spouse or family. Be aware that this is a situation ripe for resentment and anger.

Traditionally, this triangle's process places expectations on the pastor's spouse or children that are a direct consequence of the expectations the church has placed on the pastor. Often, persons in the church have difficulty relating to the pastor's family independent of their relationship to the pastor.

Encourage your pastor to keep boundaries and define time for family. Help to prioritize the church's needs so they do not become all consuming for your pastor. Build a relationship with the members of the pastor's family that is not dependent on the needs of the church.

Things to Remember about Triangles

Triangles are a fact of life. Whether or not they will spin themselves out in the ways described here, you will most likely still feel caught in the middle in some area of your life. The important things to remember are:

- Stay focused on the relationships you are actually in.
- Stay focused on your own functioning.
- Manage your own reactivity to what is being pushed on you.
- And most importantly, build your relationship with God, so you will have some idea of what pleases God as you work your way through the complex web of triangle processes.

Works Cited

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- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.

Books to Consider

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Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach by Peter L. Steinke. The Alban Institute, 1996.
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Resources: Books & Tapes

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- Saying Goodbye, A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors.* Edward A. White. Alban, 1990.



Notes

Quick Reference Guide

Information Needed	Where to Find It
Area Center: Annual Conference Office	330-499-3972 Tollfree: 1-800-831-3972
District Offices	Canal: 330-825-2761 Firelands: 419-668-6115 Mahoning Valley: 330-270-3400 Mid-Ohio: 419-522-3881 North Coast: 216-664-1602 Ohio Valley: 740-264-1601 Southern Hills: 740-425-4355 Three Rivers: 740-622-8880 Tollfree: 1-877-206-4445 Tuscarawas: 330-492-7817 Western Reserve: 440-352-2083
Pastoral Care & Counseling Office	330-456-0486 Toll-free 1-866-456-3600
Parsonage Standards	"Conference Policies and Rules: Parsonage Standards".
Policy on Clergy Housing	"Conference Policies and Rules: Policy on Clergy Housing".
Conference Policies Affecting Clergy	"Conference Policies and Rules: Conference Policies Affecting Clergy".
Where does it say pastors should not return for at least one year?	"Conference Policies and Rules: Conference Policies Affecting Clergy".
How many moving company estimates are suggested?	"Annual Conference Reports: Conference Council on Finance and Administration: Moving Expenses: Distance, Packing and Weight Limitations: Estimate".
Moving Expense Reimbursement Policy	"Annual Conference Reports: Conference Council on Finance and Administration: Moving Expenses".
Obtaining Recommendations for Movers	There is no prescribed process. Talk with other pastors, parishioners, SPRC chairpersons or inquire at your District Office.
Minimum Salary Schedule	"Annual Conference Reports: Commission on Equitable Salaries".
Pastor's Day Off, Vacation, Continuing Education and Professional Responsibilities	"Conference Policies and Rules: Conference Policies Affecting Clergy"