PASTORAL CHANGE ANNOUNCED

• Outgoing pastor prepares and sends farewell letter to the congregation, stating the reasons for the transition and what is ending (the pastoral relationship).
• Incoming pastor prepares an introduction letter, with a short bio and a word of excitement about this new pastoral relationship. Mail to entire congregation.

THREE MONTHS OUT

• Outgoing pastor begins preparing the transition packet.
• Incoming pastor begins transition blog.
• Church begins recruiting members for Transition Team.

ONE MONTH OUT

• Outgoing and incoming pastors plan a “hand-off” meeting. Transition packet to be passed to the incoming pastor at that time.
• “Passing the mantle” celebration in worship (if possible).
• Church conducts initial meeting of the Transition Team to outline scope and responsibilities.
• Promote “gift card shower” for the new pastor and family and begin collecting donated cards.
• Church personnel committee conducts exit interview with outgoing pastor.
• Outgoing pastor signs Covenant of Conduct document.
• Church plans farewell celebration for the outgoing pastor.
• Interim plans for worship made and communicated.
• Recruit helpers for pastoral family’s move-in day, if requested.

ONE WEEK OUT

• Finalize move-in plans for the pastor’s office at the church. Make repairs and paint as needed. Prepare for the new pastor to move into the office before his/her first official day of work.
• Prepare bulletin for the pastor’s first Sunday, making sure that preaching is his/her only responsibility.
• Set first meeting of the Transition Team with the new pastor for his/her first full week on the job.
• Prepare welcome celebration and gift card shower for the first Sunday.

NEW PASTOR’S FIRST OFFICIAL DAY AT WORK

• Prepare lunch meeting for pastor and staff.
• Provide pastor with a list of those in the hospital so that he/she can make visits that afternoon.
• Have employment paperwork prepared for payroll, etc.

THE FIRST SUNDAY

• Pastor delivers sermon while others direct the other parts of the service.
• Use your denomination’s ritual for welcoming a new pastor.
• Provide a liaison for the pastor’s family to make them feel welcome, help them find their way around, and introduce them to the people of the church.
• Enjoy a post-worship celebration (meal or snacks) to welcome the pastor and family. The gift cards should be given to the family at this time.
• Encourage maximum attendance by the congregation on that Sunday.

THE FIRST FULL WEEK

• Pastor has initial meeting with the Transition Team.
• Home Gatherings begin.
• Pastor meets with church board and/or individual church leaders to begin learning their roles in the church.
• Pastor begins regular pattern of staff meetings.
• Pastor prepares bulletin for the next Sunday.

THE FIRST MONTH

• Conduct the majority of the Home Gatherings within the first month.
• Pastor to attend regular meetings of church committees and/or ministry teams.
• Transition Team meets with pastor at 30-day mark to discuss adaptive challenges and begin identifying early wins.
• Pastor begins collating data from the Home Gatherings.
• Pastor begins meeting with community leaders to get a feel for the setting around the church.

THE FIRST 90 DAYS

• Regular meetings of the Transition Team continue. Expectations begin to be clarified and early wins identified, executed, and evaluated.
• Identify the breakeven point of the transition. Pastor and Transition Team begin to define when the new pastor has begun to add as much value as he or she has received from the church.
• When the Transition Team and pastor believe that the breakeven point has been reached (may take longer than 90 days), plan a celebration together. You made it!