

Transition Process Information



If a “rostered person” is leaving your congregation - a pastor, associate in ministry, or diaconal minister - you will be seeking new leadership. In our synod we have a very helpful process and very helpful people to assist you through this transition.

As soon as you know that a leader is leaving, you should contact the Bishop’s Office so that a meeting with your congregational leadership can be scheduled. The person you should speak with is Pastor Don Carlson, Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership. His email address is: don@gulfcoastsynod.org. Phone: 281-873-5665; Extension #14.

The initial steps will be:

- Set up a “Closure Consultation” with the council and departing leader.
- Explain the “Transition Process” our synod uses.
- Introduce you to your “Transition Coach.”
- Assist you in securing supply/interim leadership during the transition.

The following pages are Section 1 of our “Transition Process Manual” and will provide you with some additional initial insights.

Transition Process Manual - Section 1

Welcome!



and the future that God has in store.

The purpose of this Transition Process Manual is to provide Congregation Councils, Transition Teams, and Call Committees with the information and resources that ministry sites need during times of rostered leadership transition: pastoral, diaconal, or associate in ministry. The sections provide a step by step outline for bridging the span between what once was

“What time is it?”

People often ask, “*How long will the transition take?*” or “*How soon can we get a new pastor?*” Here are some things to keep in mind as you begin this transition.

First, there is no way to dictate how exactly how long it will take. Suffice it to say that “it takes time.” It takes time to say goodbye, time to get over the loss, time to set new directions for ministry, time to find just the right leader for those new directions, and time to get off on the right foot. It *is not wise* to be in a rush or have the process driven by some artificially imposed time line. It *is wise* to take whatever time is needed.



Second, even when congregations get to the point of interviewing, they should not be in a hurry. Do not “settle.” Congregations have gone through three or even four rounds of interviewing candidates, and have begun to doubt they will ever find the leader they need. And then, all of a sudden, there he/she is! And then, they were glad that they waited; glad that they took the time.

Third, while the above is true, it is also good to remember what Martin Luther said, “*He who wants a perfect church wants no church at all.*” Perfect congregations - including yours - do not exist. Likewise, perfect rostered leaders - and perfect spouses, perfect parents, or perfect children - simply do

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not exist. In their search, congregations should be looking for “a good match” not “a perfect match.”

Fourth, and lastly, just congregations should not try to “save time” in their search for new leadership, neither should they try to save money! Yes, “squandering money” is bad stewardship; but there are times when “not spending money” can be even worse stewardship. (Jesus said something about this in Matthew 25:14-30.) This transition is such a time!

Remember: the transition process, and the resulting leadership that is called, will shape the future mission and ministry of the congregation. It is of great consequence and, therefore, is something that congregations, councils, and committees need to do exceedingly well. To “save” several hundred or a few thousand dollars in doing something that impacts the next 10 to 20 years is to be very short-sighted; “penny wise, and pound foolish.”

The “Transition Coach” (TC)

As soon as a pastor announces that he or she is leaving, the Bishop’s Office will schedule a “Closure Consultation (Exit Interview” - see Section 1, Page 3) with the Congregation Council. At this time the council will also be introduced to the congregation’s Transition Coach. A Transition Coach:

- Will serve as an extension of the Bishop’s Office.
- Will assist and resource congregations in the transition process so that they can focus on future mission and ministry.
- Will serve the congregation (ministry site) until 6 months after installation of the pastor.
- Will coach no other congregations in transition during that time.
- Will be fully available to answer questions and provide guidance in a timely manner.
- Will be available to attend (when needed) meetings of the Congregational Council, congregation, Transition Team, Call Committee, and Mutual Ministry Committee
- Will receive a stipend that is paid *through* the Bishop’s Office. (see below)

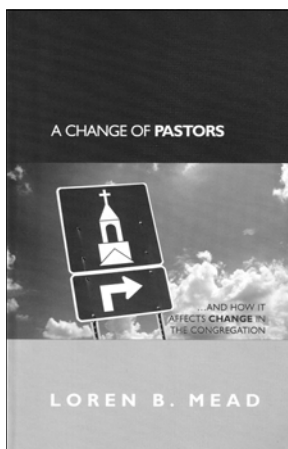
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Transition Coach Compensation

- Transition coaches will receive a stipend of \$1000 for the first 12 month period that they coach a congregation. After 12 months, they will receive an additional \$100 per month. Mileage will be reimbursed at the established IRS rate.
- A congregation entering the transition process will be asked to pay a “transition fund fee” of \$15 per worshipper, based on its “average weekend attendance” (AWA) from its most recent statistical report. For example, if a congregation has an AWA of 125 people, it would remit \$1875 to the synod’s transition fund and the coach’s stipend and mileage would be reimbursed from that fund. After the first 12 months, the congregation would remit \$100 per month.
- The minimum initial contribution a congregation will contribute will be \$1000; the maximum initial contribution will be \$3000. In this way congregations in our synod will help “bear one another’s burdens.”
- Multi-site parishes will form a “joint call committee” and remit according to their aggregate AWA.

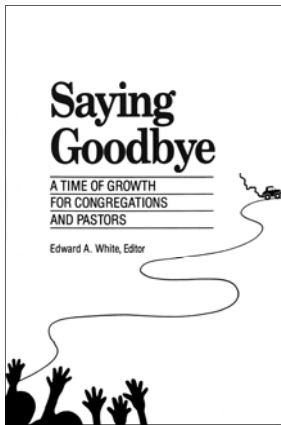
Other Resources

In addition to the Transition Coach, the “transition fund fee” will provide the congregational leadership with the following resources:



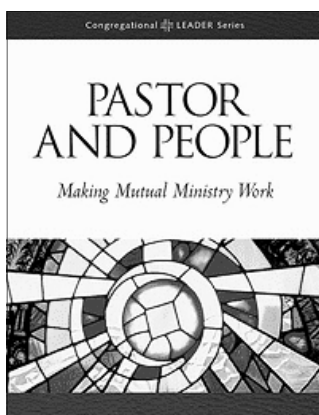
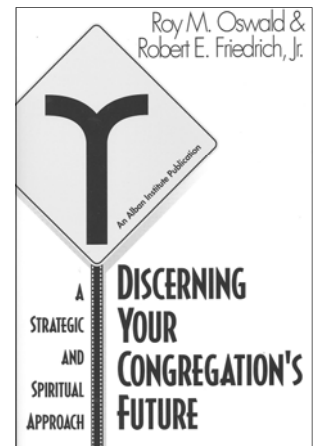
“A Change of Pastors is a helpful read for any congregation undergoing or about to undergo a change of pastors. In the midst of this transition, there is no doubt that your congregation will find a new pastor. But this book will help you to do more than merely find a hired hand to manage the preaching and the worship. You will discover what God wants you to be and do. You will find a new commitment to ministry. And you will find the pastor who will help make that ministry happen.” (from The Alban Institute website)

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“Leaving a pastorate is hard on both congregation and pastor. Learn how to make this transition a growth experience for all. Written for congregations and pastors, Saying Goodbye skillfully weaves accounts from clergy, laity, and educators of seven denominations with White’s own insight as a former General Presbyterian to create a resource for meaningful and healthy partings. Includes examples of a “farewell” worship service and litany for closure of a ministry.” (from The Alban institute website)

“Drawing on extensive consulting experience with congregations, the authors provide a step-by-step guide to congregational planning that grounds strategic planning techniques in a process of spiritual discernment. The result: members will own the vision and be eager to participate in the congregation’s calling, life, and ministry. You and your planning committee learn the theory behind the techniques, along with receiving help for addressing specific situations.” (from The Alban Institute website)



“The relationship between the pastor and the people is integral to a congregation's life and ministry. This timely resource offers key insights on tending to various aspects of this relationship, including reflections on the ministry of clergy and laity, the role of a pastor, ministry review, performance evaluation, and much more. Suitable for pastors, congregational leaders and councils, call committees, and anyone involved in church ministry .” (from the Augsburg Fortress website)