

PASTORAL TRANSITION PROTOCOL

PREAMBLE:

A pastoral transition is a critical time in the life of a church as it helps the church to grieve and say goodbye and begins the adjustment process to new leadership. Failure to manage this process well may result in unnecessary conflict, a lack of a smooth transition, and the inability of the church to continue its ministry smoothly.

The failure to manage transitions well also occasions additional pain to the church and the incoming minister. While such failures may not be intentional, they may occur due to the inadvertent omission of important steps that need to be taken to ensure a smooth and seamless leadership transition. In light of this realization, the National Board of Directors has found it prudent to develop a clearly outlined protocol to ensure that everything possible is done to enable a smooth leadership transition from one pastor to another.

A step-by-step outline of this protocol follows.

1. The Regional Superintendent shall conduct an exit interview with the incumbent, wherein his/her future role and relationship with the church shall be clarified.
2. The Regional Superintendent shall Inform all relevant parties of the resignation or retirement: Regional Leadership, Local Board, Congregation.
3. The Regional Superintendent shall obtain the incumbent's thoughts or recommendations on a successor profile.
4. **The Regional Superintendent shall also meet with the local board of deacons and council of elders to:**
 - a. Discuss change and thoughts or recommendations on a successor profile.
 - b. Clarify settlement of any financial obligations due to the exiting pastor.
 - c. Discuss and plan the farewell event.
 - d. Discuss and ensure appropriate expression of appreciation.
5. The National Secretary-Treasurer shall advertise the vacancy.

6. A subcommittee of the National Board (preferably including the Regional Superintendent) shall:

- a. Plan and conduct interviews.
- b. Shortlist the preferred candidate based on ministry fit and successor preferences.
- c. The National Board will then finalize its selection and inform the successful candidate.

7. The Regional Superintendent shall:

- a. Meet with the church board of deacons to advise them of the national board's selection and determine the successor's salary and benefits.
 - b. Consult with the successful candidate regarding his/her final acceptance of the position.
8. The National Secretary-Treasurer shall confirm the appointment with the chosen candidate in writing if accepted.
9. If accepted, The National Secretary-Treasurer shall advise the unsuccessful candidates that another applicant was selected and thank them for the interest shown.
10. The church shall be formally advised of the new pastor.
11. The incumbent shall inform the church membership, explaining the details of the transition.
12. The Regional Superintendent shall conduct an initial ministry briefing with the successor and provide guidelines appropriate to the church/ministry context;
13. If the selected candidate is a senior pastor, the Regional Superintendent shall begin the transitional protocol with that church.
14. Where possible, there shall be a mandatory handing-over exercise between the outgoing incumbent and the successor. The Orientation Checklist shall be used as a guide for this exercise. A memo of understanding should be developed which states in writing the responsibilities of the exiting pastor and his/her successor. This should be facilitated by the Regional or District Superintendent and reviewed one year after in the first instance and upon the pastoral reviews thereafter.

The memo should include the following:

- a) The status of the exiting pastor regarding his/ her attendance at congregational and regional meetings should be clearly stated.
 - b) **Pulpit Ministry:** Is the exiting pastor expected to preach on a regular schedule or only upon request of his/her successor?
 - c) **Counselling Ministry:** To what extent would the exiting pastor be engaged in counselling church members? Will this be permitted by his successor? The protocol involved in such instances must be firmly established.
 - d) How should the exited pastor respond to requests for participation in a wedding or a funeral service? Is he/she free to accept it, or should he/she refer the request to his/her successor?
 - e) The official records of the congregation should be handed over to the successor.
 - f) **Temporary absence:** The exiting pastor should consider temporarily absenting himself/herself from the church and community immediately after the transition.
 - g) The exiting pastor should be willing to make himself/herself available if his/her successor needs his/her help or asks for information. He should **WAIT** to be asked and do it carefully.
15. The Regional Superintendent shall arrange an introductory meeting with the successor and the local church leadership to facilitate a smooth transition.
 16. The Regional Superintendent shall meet with the successor to discuss the job description and performance expectations for review.
 17. The local church board conduct farewell activities.
 18. The Regional Superintendent and the local church board shall plan and conduct the installation service.
 19. The Regional Superintendent shall monitor ministry adjustment.