

PASTORAL TRANSITION

ECO desires to empower and equip local churches to flourish and make disciples in all seasons.

Avoid succumbing to the tyranny of the urgent. Congregations tend to consider the time between installed pastors as “interim.” Instead, think about this time as “transitional.” As you prepare your congregation for its next pastor, it may be helpful to envision the transitional time as tilling the soil. This way, when the new pastor arrives, he or she can plant in fertile ground.

The pastor has announced that God is calling her or him on to a new ministry. This may be expected or unexpected. It may be a relief, or it may be some of the saddest news you have ever heard. The reality is that the loss of a pastor often throws a congregation into emotional turmoil. Sometimes circumstances or individuals force the pastor to leave. Sometimes a dearly loved pastor moves to a new congregation or retires. And then there are the more unfortunate situations, such as a moral failure or death. Regardless of how it happens, a pastoral transition thrusts a congregation into a unique journey through change and loss.

Many people in congregations tend to deny rather than identify or understand the emotions of loss churning under the church’s surface. For this reason, ECO has assembled a variety of resources to support churches during pastoral transitions. For some congregations they will need succession planning, others will need a Certified Transitional Pastor, many will need resources to help the session evaluate its systems and overall mission. ECO knows that every congregation is unique and may require different resources for their particular pastoral transition. Your presbytery and Synod Staff are available to help answer your questions.

You may need to consider planning ahead, in which case the “[Succession Planning](#)” resource would be most helpful. No matter your path of transition or what your church is facing, you cannot afford to skip the important steps of preparing the session, staff, and congregation for such times. This way, a change in leadership will be a smoother process when it comes. Most of our presbyteries know how vital these tools are for the success of our local churches, and are more than willing to help subsidize the costs. In some cases, ECO can establish payments and installments based on levels of need.

We believe structural health is the key to a successful transition. It is essential to designate time to assess the health of your church and its leadership. ECO Certified Transitional Pastors are trained in assessing the structural health of churches. [Click here](#) for more information about the ECO Certified Transitional Pastor network. ECO recognizes that Succession Planning is not always a luxury afforded to you, so we hope that the rest of this section will support churches in a variety of circumstances.

