

STEP 5

INSTALL TRANSITIONAL LEADERSHIP

The beginning of a Transitional Pastor's ministry is extremely important. And yet that beginning often comes at a time when a leadership malaise has descended over the church. Many congregations that would ordinarily be great at receiving visitors and new members find themselves frozen by the prospect of welcoming a Transitional Pastor.

The first few weeks of a transitional ministry are the best time to lay out what people can expect. Who is responsible for explaining the plan to the congregation? The Transitional Pastor may understand the process of transitional leadership and may have led several congregations through similar transitions. Much more specific knowledge needs to be communicated at this time beyond simply knowing what usually happens. Lay congregational leaders will head off trouble by planning a strong onboarding for the Transitional Pastor.

One of the most difficult concepts to communicate at the beginning of a transition is what the congregation should expect regarding new ministry initiatives or structural reorganization. If covenant partners assume too static a picture for what will be happening in the transition, they may become restless or disengaged. If they anticipate massive changes from the core values of the past, they may grow anxious or start pressuring leaders for their vision of the way things should be. A balance of innovation and continuity must be found in order to embrace the best of the past and create an exciting vision for the future.

In the first few weeks, a clear message needs to be repeated multiple times in multiple settings. The congregation needs to hear on several occasions what can be expected in the coming months. Set aside time during a service, or have a special worship service, to commission your Transitional Pastor. Be sure to include a significant introduction, an explanation of the commitment, pastoral vows, Covenant Partner vows, and specific prayers for the Transitional Pastor and his or her ministry.