

Q11 What can we do when all the changes in our church seem so overwhelming?

A. Great question. The Lord has a way of bringing changes to expose to what degree we rest in familiarity rather than in Him. The reality is that there is a "shelf life" and reinvention cycle that every church should go through to remain healthy and vibrant, not lethargic and stagnant. Here is Gordon MacDonald's version from his great book: *Who Stole My Church?*

1. Need/Opportunity: Spotting the dire needs and gaps.
2. Vision: Creating an inspirational way to meet the need.
3. Initiative: Taking steps to get a team start doing the vision.
4. Programming: Creating a repeatable system of programs.
5. Institution: Maintaining the smooth operation of programs.
6. Tradition: Continuing the programs, though outdated.
7. Reinvention: Returning to step one to start a new cycle.

Q12 What can we do about people wanting to leave our church during the change?

A. First and foremost, be gracious. People are very different and handle stress and change differently. Here's what you can expect based on a study by Everett Rogers about how people adapt to change (*The Diffusion of Innovation*):

- 2.5% Innovators: Instigate change and excited by it!
- 13.5% Early Adopters: Catch the vision for change quickly.
- 34% Early Majority: Process at first, then accept change.
- 34% Late Majority: Slowly process, then accept change.
- 16% Resisters: Resistant to change and prefer not to.

Q13 What does a typical pastor's job description look like?

A. There isn't one because "we have gifts that differ according to the grace to us," and that will be reflected in how a pastor prioritizes all the things below that people expect of him. *How would you rank the 24 things below with #1 being the most important, and so on?*



- ___ Preach the Word for conviction
- ___ Teach the Truth for clarity
- ___ Equip the Saints for service
- ___ Train the Staff
- ___ Lead the Elders
- ___ Encourage the Laity
- ___ Evangelize the Lost
- ___ Disciple the Saved
- ___ Pray for the Sick
- ___ Counsel the Hurting
- ___ Visit the Hospitalized
- ___ Contact the Guests
- ___ Cast the Vision
- ___ Settle the Disputes
- ___ Handle the Complaints
- ___ Reach the Community
- ___ Serve the Denomination
- ___ Impact the World
- ___ Marry the Couples
- ___ Bury the Dead
- ___ Dedicate the Babies
- ___ Baptize the Saved
- ___ Serve the Lord's Supper
- ___ Ordain the Called

When a Church Loses Their Pastor Now What?



Q1 Is it normal for a pastor to leave a church, especially if he helped start it?

A. Absolutely normal. The average stay is less than 5 years, so if your pastor has been their longer than that, you are very fortunate.

Q2 Isn't five years a pretty short stay?

A. Some denominations intentionally relocate pastors every 5 years or so to keep both the pastor and church from getting stale and set in their ways. Others argue that since it takes 2 or 3 years to build trust between the two, longer stays are more advisable.

Q3 Why do I feel so abandoned and even angry that the pastor left us?

A. Those who have been abandoned by a parent, spouse or others they have trusted will be more prone to interpret God's reassignment of their pastor as abandonment. This can stir up unresolved anger as well.

Q4 How long does it take for these feelings, along with sadness and fear to go?

A. It will vary from person to person because with any significant loss, not just death, we experience grief and its five stages (denial; bargaining; anger; depression; acceptance) in various degrees, sequences and duration.

Q5 Shouldn't he have found a successor, or at least help find one before leaving?

A. That very rarely happens for several reasons, but here's the primary reason: Every church tends to take on the characteristics of their senior pastor (good and bad), so with his departure, room must be made for a new pastor with a fresh vision that will always be and should be different. In most cases, departing pastors trying to influence the selection of a successor will be viewed as micro-managing and/or trying to hang on. This is the same reason why it is usually most wise for retiring pastors to become members in a church other than where he was pastor.

Q6 Who will run the church and pastor the people until we find a new pastor?

A. Several options here. If a good staff and/or elder/deacon system is in place, they may be able to carry the load for a season. Regarding pulpit duties, they can rotate among themselves and weave in guest preachers, or hire an "interim preacher" to fill the pulpit on Sundays only, or include other worship services. Some churches may need to hire an "interim pastor" to not only preach, but to work with the staff and key committees as well. One last option for the more pro-active churches is to hire an "intentional interim pastor" to do all of the above, but also help the church define, prepare and position themselves to receive a pastor that would be a good fit for them. Compensation would obviously be increased for each level of interim service.

Q7 How long do interim periods tend to last before a pastor can be found?

A. Anywhere from two months to two years, depending on the size of the church and the qualifications you are looking for in a pastor. Up to a year is a reasonable expectation.

Q8 So how do we find a new pastor?

A. Okay, here we go. In a nutshell...

1. Form a pastor search committee of about 5 to 9 members that reflects the multi generations, gender, and ethnicity in your church.
2. Complete and return a survey they will conduct with your church family that poses question regarding what they'd like to see in a new pastor.
3. Be patient as the search committee receives training and counsel from denominational consultants who can help them seek the heart of God and the man He has in mind for your church.
4. Pray daily for your search committee as they gather resumes from various sources, follow-up leads, travel to hear candidates preach, conduct interviews, check references, compare findings, cross-check survey results, keep confidences, and regularly meet to keep the ball rolling.
5. Invite the top candidate the search committee is unanimously recommending to come to your church on a Sunday to "preach in view of a call" so that you can hear his heart and vision for the future in his message, and often in a Q & A session following the service.
6. Cast your private ballot as to whether or not you believe the Lord has brought this man to be your pastor as the search team seems to believe.
7. Look for an 85% or better positive vote to be more sure of God's will and timing. Less than 70% is a high risk.

Q9 What about hiring or promoting someone already among us?

A. Some churches try to do that since they have a first hand track record to rely upon, but it is usually for support positions, not the lead pastor. But still, it can be done, especially if the church is relatively small. The difficulty is that no staff or church member can fully appreciate the enormous difference between being a "Moses" and an "Aaron" unless they've been a "Moses" before. The lead guy bears much more weight and responsibility, especially in a large church, than people and even support staff realize. The bigger the church, the more experienced a candidate ought to be.

Q10 Beyond experience, what are some qualities to look for in a new pastor?

A. The qualities listed in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 for elders and deacons is the best place to start. But if you want all that boiled down into five basic "must haves," I would look for:

Authenticity- Is this man the real deal? Is he the same at home as in the pulpit? Does the inside match what we see on the outside?

Integrity- Does this man do the right thing even if it hurts? Even when it costs him? Even when no one is looking?

Humility- Does He honor and lift up the Lord as a reflex in all things? Does he naturally speak more highly of the Lord than he does himself or his accomplishments? Is he kind?

Vision- Does he have a passionate hope and plan for the future in the Lord and as BIG as the Lord is? Does he cast the vision well?

Wisdom- Does he see balance and nuance when integrating knowledge, experience, and Scripture into real life scenarios?