Transitioning Between Pastors

Introduction:

Between when a pastor leaves and a new pastor is on the job is the interim or transitional time. This period of time does not have to be a stressful time for the church and it does not need to be time wasted or unproductive for the church. “The way a congregation chooses to use its interim time will shape congregation growth, identity and health for years to come.” This time will determine whether the new pastor and the congregation will form a solid ministry team.

There are certain attitudes that every congregation will experience in one degree or the other. These include

1. Grief or sadness over the loss of a pastor;

2, Joy or gladness may be experienced by others;

3 Some may get angry or Mad the feeling of abandonment;

4, Others may feel confusion due to their understanding or lack of understanding concerning Church life.

The goal during the interim or transitioning period is to bring everyone together and in unity to move forward.

Some things to remember:

1. Don’t get impatient and think that a pastor must immediately be found. The church has good leaders in their membership. And besides God already has the pastor in mind to lead the church toward the future. The key is the church being in tune with God and knowing God’s man for the ministry.

2. Begin to earnestly pray for God’s pastoral family. He is already out there and God is dealing with him and his family right now. Pray that the church will be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Pray that the church might be united and ready for their coming. Pray that God would begin now to love the pastor through you and the whole congregation.

3. Review the Church’s Constitutions and By Laws. The Bylaws of the Church should give direction to the church concerning what the church is to do when a pastor announces His resignation. It should state who is responsible during the interim to provide a preacher in the pulpit each Sunday. It should also state when and how the Pastor Search Committee is to be formed. It would state who should serve on the committee, when they are to be elected by the church and the make-up of the committee.

4. Pastor Search Committee should have a well defined job description. The Association office should have information to assist the church in the process. Three important things a committee needs to do before looking for candidates include: Develop a questionnaire for the church concerning expectations of the church for the pastor. The committee needs to do a study of the Church concerning both growth and decline and to consider the positive and negatives of those time periods. This will be insightful for the church. A Pastoral job description should be determined before looking begins.

5. Filling the Pulpit.

a. Interim Pastor. If the church chooses to have an interim pastor the best practice is to not have an interim who is interested in becoming the pastor. An interim is there to lead the church to examine them self and to plan for the future. An interim who desires to be the pastor will be focused upon His own interests rather than the church.

b. Weekly filling of the Pulpit. The pulpit should be filled not by someone who wants to say something but someone who has something to say. The church needs to hear a word from God that is relevant to them.

6. Receiving Resumes

a. The Pastor Search Committee should set a cut-off date for receiving resumes.

b. All resumes should be received graciously.

c. The State Convention, Association, Seminary, Colleges other pastors and individuals who are friends of the candidate are sources for securing resumes.

7. Nine Things to Remember

a. Pray, Pray, Pray

b. Study the Church and Community

c. Develop a Profile of what the Church needs in a pastor.

d. Know what you believe

e. Examine financial support

f. Investigate and evaluate prospects

g. Get personally acquainted with the prospective pastor

h. Reach an agreement on all “negotiable”. (Finacials, Time away, sabbatical, relationship to staff, etc)

i. Plan and invite prospect to come in View of a Call.

1 Samuel 8:19, But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, No we will have a king.”