



50 Ways to Welcome your New Pastor or Associate Pastor

From the Lewis Center for Church Leadership

Prepared by Robert Crossman

Prepare to welcome your new pastor

1. Open your hearts and decide that you are going to love your new pastor.
2. Begin praying daily for the new pastor and family, even as you continue to pray for your departing pastor and family.
3. Invite church members individually to send cards of welcome and encouragement to the incoming pastor.
4. Know that welcoming your new pastor in genuine and effective ways lays the ground work for a healthy and vital relationship and the development of stable, long-term ministries together.
5. Plan for the transition. Occasionally important welcoming gestures are missed with everyone thinking someone else is handling these details.
6. Appoint a specific liaison person to whom the pastor can go for help and information during the transition.

Say goodbye to your current pastor in a healthy way

7. Show love, regard, and even grief, for your departing pastor. This is one of the best things you can do for the new pastor.
8. Acknowledge the change in public ways.
Especially in the case of a much-beloved pastor, this allows the congregation better to let go and receive the new pastor.
9. Provide the congregation the opportunity to say thank you and goodbye to the outgoing pastor, even if things have not always gone well.
10. Find appropriate occasions — in worship and at other times — to thank the outgoing pastor.
11. Express appreciation in ways that are consistent with what you have done in the past.
12. Consider giving the pastor the last two weeks off.
This helps the pastor enter the new situation rested and gives an emotional buffer between one pastor's last Sunday and another pastor's first Sunday.
13. Plan goodbye celebrations prior to the beginning of the two weeks off.

14. Provide information to the local media about the outgoing pastor's accomplishments and future plans.
15. Do not invite the former pastor to return for weddings, funerals, or baptisms. This allows your former pastor to engage fully with his or her new congregation, and it establishes your new pastor as everyone's pastor from the beginning.

Make things move-in ready

16. Make sure the parsonage and pastor's office are clean and ready. Offer to provide help or a cleaning service if needed.
17. Determine if the parsonage is in need of repairs or painting. Consult the outgoing and incoming pastors about timing so as not to disrupt the lives of either party. Do not ask a new pastor to move into a parsonage "under construction."
18. Consult the new pastor on any paint, design, or furnishings issues.
19. Offer to have someone cut the parsonage grass.
20. Make sure the new pastor and church officials are clear on how moving expenses are paid and all matters related to compensation, benefits, and reimbursement policies.

Welcome your pastor on moving day

21. Stock the parsonage refrigerator and pantry with some staples.
22. Make sure there are kid-friendly foods and snacks in the refrigerator if children are arriving.
23. Have a small group on hand to greet the new pastor and family when they arrive and to help as needed.
24. Offer child care if there is an infant or toddler in the household.
25. Invite children in the household to do things with others of their same age.
26. Welcome any youth in the household by having church youth group members stop by and offer to show them around.

Continue the welcome during the entry period

27. Take food over for the first few days. Many churches continue the practice of having a “pounding” for the new pastor when persons bring food items.
28. Provide a map with directions to local dry cleaners, grocery store, drug store, veterinarian, etc., and information on local options for internet and cable television providers.
29. Give gift certificates to several of your favorite restaurants in the community.
30. Give the pastor and family a welcome reception on the first Sunday.
31. Plan a worship celebration of the new appointment.
32. Invite the new pastor to any social events held by Sunday School classes or other groups in the early months.
33. Make sure the pastor’s spouse and children, if applicable, are invited to Sunday School and other appropriate small groups.
34. Continue to remember your new pastor and family in your daily prayers.

Help the new pastor become familiar with the congregation

35. Introduce yourself to the pastor repeatedly! You have one name to learn; your pastor has many names to learn.
36. Wear name tags. Even if name tags are not a tradition, the congregation can wear them for a few weeks to help the pastor learn names.
37. Provide a current pictorial directory of all the church members, if available.
38. Provide an up-to-date list of all church committees and officers.
39. Provide the new pastor with a tour of where things are kept inside the church and perhaps a floor plan of the facilities.
40. Orient the new pastor to information systems and the way records are kept.
41. Make sure the pastor has a list of home bound or

nursing home members, a list of those struggling with long term illness, and a list of those still in grief over recent deaths in the family. Better yet, take the pastor for an introduction to each of these households.

42. Have an appropriate person offer to go with the pastor for introductions and support if there are particularly urgent pastoral situations (a member near death or the family of a member who has just died).
43. Have a lay official offer to take the pastor to meet church members in their businesses or other work settings, if they are easily accessible.
44. Offer to help arrange small group sessions to meet and talk with the congregation.
45. Create a “church yellow pages” (a list of people in the church who have specific skills that a newcomer may find beneficial.... auto mechanic, doctor, dentist, dry cleaners, book store, office supply, etc.).

Help the new pastor connect to the community

46. Provide local media with information about the new pastor.
47. Provide a list of hospitals, nursing homes, and community service agencies.
48. Introduce your new pastor to other clergy in the community. Provide information on any ecumenical activities or associations.
49. Introduce the new pastor to public and community leaders.
50. Ask church members in civic clubs to take the new pastor to one of their meetings.

Dr. Robert Crossman, Minister of New Church Starts and Congregational Development for the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, is the primary author of this document. The Lewis Center staff and others provided suggestions and editorial assistance.

CARING FOR YOUR NEW PASTOR

A word to Staff/Parish Relations Committees from the Center for Clergy Excellence

In order to thrive and serve—in a new setting or in any ministry setting—clergypersons need Sabbath time; vacation, family, and personal time; continuing education and spiritual formation; peer support; assessment; respect; and encouragement. Clergypersons and their Staff/Parish Relations committees have the unique opportunity and responsibility to work together to help clergypersons get what they need to thrive and serve Jesus Christ in and through a congregation.

Sabbath time

All Christians are called to a time of Sabbath, to follow the example of Christ, who sought time away for his spiritual and physical health and renewal, taking seriously the ancient command to “Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.” Ancient Jews and Christians observed a Sabbath on Friday or Saturday. Although many modern Christians consider Sunday their Sabbath, most pastors must choose a different day for rest and renewal. Each pastor’s Sabbath time should be negotiated with the Staff/Parish Relations Committee and respected by all. If an emergency arises during the pastor’s Sabbath time, another pastor should be called or another Sabbath time arranged in its place.

Vacation, family, and personal time

The Conference standards for clergy effectiveness require clergy to “live balanced lives which demonstrate an appropriate work ethic regarding time and attention spent in work for the congregation or agency where appointed as well as appropriate time for family and recreation.” Additionally, pastors are required by scripture and tradition to care for their families. According to 1 Timothy 3:4, attentiveness to and orderliness in family life is a precondition to effective leadership in the church. Therefore, all full time pastors who have served for five years or less in any annual conference in The United Methodist Church must be allowed at least two weeks of paid vacation time each year (includes two Sundays). After five years of service, at least three weeks of paid vacation time must be offered (includes three Sundays). After ten years of service, at least four weeks paid vacation time must be offered (includes four Sundays). Additionally, many congregations offer pastors an equal amount of family or personal time for unforeseen events such as illnesses, accidents, and the deaths of family members or friends.

Continuing education and spiritual formation

“In order to lead the church in fulfilling the mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ”, the Discipline requires that “throughout their careers clergy shall engage in continuing education for ministry, professional development, and spiritual formation and growth” (2012 Discipline, ¶1351.1.) “A clergy member’s continuing education and spiritual growth program should include such leaves at least one week each year and at least one month during one year of every quadrennium. Such leaves shall not be considered as part of the ministers’ vacations” (2012 Discipline, ¶1351.2.) Our conference requires each full time clergyperson to engage in a minimum of 20 contact hours (2.0 continuing education units or CEUs) continuing education plus a minimum of 10 contact hours (1.0 CEU) spiritual formation.

The Center for Clergy Excellence seeks to offer geographically-accessible, affordable continuing education options for clergy. However, ideally, clergypersons and congregations should work together to assure that each pastor is receiving the quality and quantity of continuing education and spiritual formation that meets her or his specific needs and will improve his or her skills so she or he can then lead the congregation in fulfilling its mission.

Many congregations add continuing education funds to each pastor's salary each year so that financial restraints will not keep the pastor from growing in faith and improving his or her skills. If these funds are set aside as reimbursable expense accounts, only continuing education and spiritual formation expenses may be reimbursed; the clergyperson is not liable for income taxes on these funds; and, at the end of each year, unused funds are retained by the congregation.

The complete current Conference policy for continuing education and spiritual formation is included in the additional resources at the back of this binder.

Sabbaticals

Throughout their years of service, clergypersons are encouraged to take significant time away from the local church for renewal and study. In fact, the Discipline allows clergy in full connection who have served full time for six consecutive years (or equivalent) to be granted sabbatical leave for up to one year. To be eligible, qualified clergy seeking sabbatical must submit a written request including plans for study or travel to the board of ordained ministry, with copies to the bishop and district superintendent at least six months before annual conference. (2012 Discipline ¶1352) Historically, however, clergy sabbaticals were rare because there were no funds available to support the clergyperson on sabbatical or to pay for an alternate leader for the pastor's congregation.

Now, in the Texas Annual Conference, sabbaticals are becoming financially feasible. Through our new Sustentation Fund, qualified clergypersons who apply and are approved for up to four months of sabbatical leave will continue to receive full compensation from their local churches. During their absence, specially trained interim ministers—paid by the Conference—will serve the local church. Informational brochures are available now. Contact Nancy Slade in the Center for Clergy Excellence (nslade@txcumc.org).

Regular annual assessments

Few like the idea of being "assessed" or the idea of "assessing" someone else. Yet the required annual clergy assessment process can be seen as one important way to care for clergy because it is an opportunity to review the work your congregation and clergyperson have accomplished together, pause, and say "well done" and "here are some ways we might work better together during the coming year."

The current Clergy Self-Assessment Inventory and the Staff/Parish Relations Committee Clergy Assessment Inventory are found on the Conference website at www.txcumc.org at Clergy/Clergy Excellence > Accountability Ministries > Annual Assessments. Completed assessments should be forwarded via mail, e-mail or fax to your District Superintendent by November 1. A separate assessment should be completed for each pastor and associate pastor at each charge or church.

Please note that statements concerning appointment preferences have been removed from the assessment. Concerns about your congregation's appointment preferences should be directed to your District Superintendent. Because, as Gil Rendle wrote in his Alban Weekly article entitled, "*Making Pastoral Evaluation Worthwhile*", "evaluations should be formative (What have we learned over the past year and what should we work on next?) rather than summative (Is he/she good or bad? Do we keep her/him or not?)."

Compensation – Salary and Benefits

Few pastors are motivated to enter full time Christian service because of the money. However, compensation can become a de-motivating factor for clergypersons when it does not allow them to enjoy basic necessities.

In setting the salary for your pastor, consider looking at the salaries of pastors of comparable churches (Conference Journal), or contacting the Staff/Parish Relations chairpersons of comparable congregations or your District Superintendent. You must pay the Minimum Salary for each full time clergyperson.

Minimum Salaries for 2019

Full time Conference member = \$40,000

Full time local pastor = \$34,000

Seminary student local pastor = \$31,000 (scheduled class hours and hours worked at the church = 40+ hours/week)

Undergraduate student local pastor = \$28,000 (scheduled class hours and hours worked at the church = 40+ hours/week)

To help churches/charges grow through the benefit of having appropriate pastoral staffing (even though they might not initially be able to afford it), Equitable Compensation funds are available to qualifying congregations. These funds pay 22% of a pastor's salary and pension for a maximum of five years. The church or charge is responsible for paying 78% of the clergyperson's salary and pension. Full details are available each year in the pre-Conference and Conference Journals.

Note: "Housing shall not be considered as part of compensation or remuneration."
(2012 Book of Discipline ¶1252.4e)

Parsonage

In order to thrive, every pastor must have respected, private space. Every church/charge must provide housing or an adequate housing allowance for its full time pastor(s).

The church today demands the clergy to be not only a preacher, as was the early circuit rider, but a resident pastor and responsible citizen in the community. In order to meet these felt needs, and to call men and women to a dedicated ministry, the church must provide living conditions that will establish an adequate base from which to operate. It is the privilege and responsibility of the members of each congregation to provide a physical setting which will give the parsonage family the comfort and convenience so that the energies of the pastor may be more concentrated on his or her task and willing service in the church of God. It is the responsibility of the parsonage family to provide cleaning and care of the parsonage, which will protect the interior facilities and amenities such as paint and floor coverings. Because the parsonage, like the church building, reflects upon the congregation and pastor, it should be in such condition that all concerned can be justifiably proud of it. In view of this, parsonages must meet the Conference Parsonage Standards (which can be found in the 2013 Conference Journal, J22-J23.)

Parsonages should be large enough to accommodate the pastor's family, and provide adequate space for the entertainment of guests. The following minimum standards are recommended:

- 1800 square feet living space
- 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms
- Adequate major appliances (stove, refrigerator, washer, and dryer)
- Hot and cold running water in bathrooms, kitchen, and laundry

- Adequate heating and air conditioning
- Adequate closet and storage space
- Adequate garage or carport space with outdoor storage area
- Proper sewer disposal
- Fire extinguisher in kitchen
- Smoke detectors for kitchen, living, and bedroom areas
- Window covering, drapes, curtains, and/or blinds

As of 2008, parsonage families in the Texas Annual Conference provide all furniture. This year a resolution is going to Annual Conference that would guarantee that clergy receiving a housing allowance in lieu of a parsonage would receive an allowance equal to no less than 25% of their total cash salary (including accountable reimbursement funds.) Benefits are not considered compensation. Further, the Center recommends that the housing allowance adequately reflects the fair market value of housing in proximity to the church.

If the parsonage family is expected to maintain the lawn, the church should provide a mower, lawn tools, and hoses. The congregation should insure the parsonage; the parsonage family may insure personal property with tenant homeowners' insurance. The parsonage(s) should be inspected at least once a year, and maintained in good condition. Congregations must remember that the parsonage is the pastor's home and all necessary inspections, repairs, and service visits should be scheduled in advance to meet the convenience of the parsonage family.

Family

The choices and decisions of pastors and their families must also be respected. Congregations contribute to a pastor's health and effectiveness by treating the pastor's family members as individuals rather than extensions of the pastor or employees of the church. Decision-making about their church membership, attendance, and involvement belong exclusively to them, as do all other choices and decisions ordinary citizens are permitted to make in the course of their lives.

Conflict Resolution

Sometimes pastors need to be protected in the midst of congregational conflict. Your congregation can help by adopting a biblical model for resolving conflict and achieving reconciliation. "Agreeing and Disagreeing Love", a pamphlet including guidelines for Christians in times of disagreement, is available from the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center for only \$1.00 (www.LMPeaceCenter.org or phone 630.627.0507). Practice appropriate Christian responses to people who have grievances. The Center for Clergy Excellence offers a Form and Plan for Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution. For more information, contact Nancy Slade, nslade@txcumc.org.

Encouragement

Unlike most church members, pastors need affirmation. Pastors care what congregants say and think. This is a positive thing. Imagine a pastor who doesn't care what his or her parishioners think! However, it is also a challenge. Because pastors who do not feel respected and appreciated will not be able to fully or appropriately invest themselves in the lives of their congregants. Even if you are not a member of Staff/Parish Relations Committee, you can help your pastor feel appreciated and affirmed. A few suggestions:

- Pray for your pastor every day or every Sunday, and let him or her know you are praying.
- Choose to become a one-person cheerleading squad for your pastor(s).
 - ⇒ No preacher dreads the words "great sermon."
 - ⇒ No pastor can hear the words "you're doing a great job" too often.
 - ⇒ You can say encouraging words in person and via phone, e-mail, and mail.
- Celebrate your pastor.
 - ⇒ Publicly show appreciation on his or her anniversary of service to your church.
 - ⇒ Designate a Clergy Appreciation Sunday; invite all to say "thank you."
 - ⇒ Remember your pastor's or pastors' birthdays and wedding anniversaries.

Thank you for caring for your new pastor!