

## PASTORAL TRANSITION – Developing a Plan

A successful plan may not include all of these elements, and some of the elements could be formulated at various points throughout the transition, rather than before it occurs. However, some of the elements should be in place before a pastor even considers leaving his present congregation. The goal of this plan is not simply to prepare for a change of pastors, but for a transition in the life of the congregation.

- The Session designates a small group of elders with whom the pastor will communicate when he is considering another ministry position, or contemplating resignation/retirement.
- The smaller group, and at some later point the entire Session, commits to pray regularly for the pastor regarding his sense of call to a different place of ministry, resignation, or retirement.
- In the event the pastor decides to make a transition, the Session, working with the pastor, develops a timetable for communicating the pastor's plans to the congregation.
- Working together with the pastor, the Session develops a timetable for the pastor's departure.
- The Session determines if an interim pastor would be beneficial to the spiritual health of the congregation.
- The Session determines who is responsible for securing preachers for pulpit supply during the pastoral vacancy.
- The Session determines the parameters for the departing pastor's ministry within the congregation once he leaves, including the role the successor pastor will play in defining/adjusting those parameters.
- The Session develops pastoral and congregational profiles for the search committee.
- The Session recommends to the congregation an appropriate size for the pastoral search committee, along with prudent categories that should be represented (e.g., elders, deacons, women, youth, congregation members at large, etc.).
- The Session calls a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing a pulpit committee (BCO 20-2).
- The Session establishes a protocol of how the search committee will request a congregational meeting in order to report its recommendation for the election of a new pastor (BCO 20-2).
- The Session schedules an informal meeting to update the congregation on where the church is in its life, to allow the congregation to express any grief it may feel at the loss of its pastor, and to pray.
- In consultation with the committee, the Session schedules ongoing updates to the congregation from the pastoral search committee.
- During the pastoral vacancy, the Session schedules regular times of prayer for the congregation, the Session, and the pastoral search committee.

