



Starting Again With a New Pastor

*A Congregational
Guide for Making
a Healthy
Pastoral
Transition*

Compiled from many sources and many experienced folks by Rev. Micheal Selleck

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Being involved in a pastoral change is a challenging time for the church as well as the pastor and his or her family. While nothing can truly take away the hard work and necessary time of physically moving and getting adjusted, there are things that can be done to minimize stress and maximize joy.

The following are some of the types of questions that should be addressed.

"What kinds of events or activities will help bring healthy closure to the departing pastor and family?"

"What needs to be done to assist the pastor and family with the move?"

"How can we make sure that the move is framed in healthy and positive ways?"

"What kinds of events will help acquaint the new pastor with the congregation?"

"What needs to be done to the church office and the parsonage to welcome the new pastor?"

"What kinds of orientation, (hospitals, shut-in's, shopping, restaurants, historical highlights, schools, etc.) will the new pastor need?"

"If there is a spouse and or children, what can be done to help them feel welcome?"

"How can the church best facilitate the physical moving process for both the incoming and departing pastor and family?"

To address these tasks consider establishing a two transition teams through the SPRC; one to handle "farewell" and a second to handle "welcome". The makeup of each team should reach into the congregation and not be limited to SPRC members. The teams will need visionary chairpersons with gifts of administration, inspiration, and encouragement. These two can work together, but should provide primary focus to their unique arena.

For the transition team working on the welcome, consider appointing one key person to serve as the "guide" for the new pastor, a person who will provide hand-holding, and serve as the conduit of information for all involved. This will have to be a person highly respected and without personal agenda.

Below are a few "suggestions" which can be considered by the transition teams. Each suggestion addresses a potential need and, when done well, can go a long way to assuring a good move between church and pastor. As the selected tasks below are reviewed for appropriateness, identify who will take responsibility for the task and put his or her name on a master timeline. Don't feel compelled to implement each task, nor limit yourself from trying a few new ideas that may spring to mind. Remember, the incoming pastor has no basis of reference when coming into the life of a new congregation. If little or nothing is provided from this list the pastor is "running blind," slowing and muddling the transition time.

These kinds of intentional tasks have two quickly identifiable benefits. First is providing a significant and viable process for saying hello and goodbye. A second benefit is allowing people the opportunity to be 'meaningfully' busy in the emotionally complex weeks of pastoral transition.

If you have suggestions or ideas, please e-mail them to me, Mike Selleck at mselleck@ngumc.org and I'll take them seriously as this document is perfected for the good of all North Georgia United Methodists in transition.

For Christ and Church,
Rev. Micheal Selleck

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CONGREGATIONS CHECK LIST FOR THE DEPARTING PASTOR AND FAMILY

1. A farewell banquet.

This should be a festive and happy time where good days and incidents are celebrated. This event should be done a few weeks before the last Sunday, at a time when most of the congregation can be present. The meal should be excellent, perhaps one of the favorite meals of the pastor; there could be a time of story telling by good story tellers, reflecting on the pastors high and notable points. Humor is always a great way to mitigate the hurt of separation, so use it to help the situation without becoming goofy or foolish. Some churches have a roast-the-pastor tradition where the pastor is remembered in both a humorous as well as inspirational way.

Don't shy away too much from some of the hard times of the pastor's tenure if it can be done well and thoughtfully. Acknowledging that not everything was 'sunshine and brightness' in a pastor's tenure adds credibility to the whole affair. Make sure the folks who speak at a roast are clever and outstanding communicators or else this has the potential to come off as very tacky.

Consider inviting community dignitaries or folks outside the congregation who may have played a pivotal role in the pastor's ministries while at the church. Let these folks have a few moments to share a word of appreciation alongside the words from the membership.

Use a specific team just for the farewell banquet (other than for the welcoming banquet for the new pastor) to prevent banquet planning burnout. However, it is essential that these two teams stay in constant contact with one another sharing ideas, plans, and details.

Task: Arrange for a special celebration.

Coordinator for this task: _____

2. An appropriate gift

An appropriate gift is something given to the pastor so he or she can remember you, a picture of the church building, a memento of a project or ministry developed, etc., is especially appropriate and meaningful for a pastor to take away from his or her time with you. Big gifts or big checks for a dear sum of money are not appropriate for a pastor moving to a new location. (If a pastor is retiring from your congregation, a gift should represent something else and should be given at a time when a larger gathering of people from other congregations the pastor has served should be invited to participate and attend. Even in a retirement situation, caution and care should be taken in regards to a big gift.)

Some churches paint themselves into a corner in regards to giving 'departing gifts' by doing too much just one time, thereby establishing an imaginary expectation for the next pastor and the next, etc. This is a scenario that can quickly spiral out of appropriateness and cannot be stopped without a degree of embarrassment. Limit the cost and put energy into the thoughtfulness of the gift instead; less money and more love.

If a cash gift is determined to be the best option, a one time request for a love offering can be mailed out to the members without pressure to participate. It is NEVER appropriate to use church funds for padding a love offering or purchasing a parting gift. Church funds are given for ministry and it is a violation to use the money for this kind of purpose. Pastors should be honored for their service, but a hefty 'bonus' check isn't an appropriate part of our culture nor should it find a foothold.

Also, when considering a cash gift, allow for the possibility of making a donation to a special charity, mission, or scholarship fund in the name of the pastor.

Other thoughtful gifts that seem appropriate are:

a. If the pastor's 'work' computer is more than a four years old, its value is almost nothing to anyone **except** the departing pastor who has been using it. It would be a small but worthy gesture to let him or her keep the laptop or PC and provide a newer unit for the incoming pastor.

If however, the computer is only a year or so old, do some checking to see if the provided computer is the pastor's main business tool or not. If it is, it may well be that letting the pastor keep it as a gift would be a much appreciated gesture. Make sure this is permitted (Trustees) and affordable (are their finances available to purchase a new computer for the incoming pastor) before moving forward in this particular path. (A pastoral transition is a good time to review the status of the church computer equipment. This is similar to having a regular calendar event such as the Fourth of July, ("fireworks") to replace batteries in fire alarms.)

b. A high quality framed photo or a very well done artists rendering of the church. Be sure you'd be proud to have it on your wall before you expect someone else to be proud to have it on theirs.

c. A signed jersey from the church recreation team(s) especially fitting if the pastor was involved with the leagues over his or her tenure.

d. Something for the children to remember the church/community.

e. A scrapbook of persons, activities and good times with letters of appreciation included for reading at other times. Letting people add letters encourages healthy goodbyes and better emotional release at the time of departure. Read all the letters to assure the content of each is upbeat, fair, and wholesome.

Task: Arrange for an appropriate gift(s) for the pastor and his or her family.
Coordinator for this task: _____

3. A farewell worship moment

It is appropriate to have some time set aside in the pastor's last worship service for the purposes of saying goodbye and acknowledging his or her years of service with you. Select a lay person of ability and respect to share some reflections and appreciations regarding the pastor's tenure.

Not all pastorates are equal. Some appointments don't go well, some go heavenly. Some pastorates are too short, some are too long. Most are a mixture of all this, and there is plenty to pick and choose from on both sides of the "effectiveness" ledger. List and talk of the good things, avoid the hard things. If this means walking around a '900 pound gorilla' in the sanctuary, then do so. This is not a time for overly frank honesty and brutal truth telling at the expense of a warm and graceful goodbye done with good will and charm.

a. Take time for a sacred moment; invite the pastor to the railing for a laying on of hands in prayer, and or some special music for the pastor and spouse, or consider a litany read and shared by the congregation acknowledging the pastor's leadership, friendship, and spiritual guidance. One way, or another, put a ritualistic and holy aura on and over the pastor's tenure with you.

b. Take some time to share a few insights, reflections, and good wishes. Keep this light without becoming clownish; keep it meaningful and dignified without becoming morose.

c. Offer a token gift at this time, a plaque, or an engraved desk ornament, a “goodie” bag with favorite candies, trinkets, and comforts, for the journey to the next church, something modest but meaningfully appropriate for a time of worship. (This is a second gift, different than the one given at the banquet which might be a golf club or more pedestrian kind of gift that may not play as well in a worship setting as it does at a casual evening banquet.)

If the congregation has more than one service, there are two considerations. If the people who attend each service have a significant identification with ‘their’ specific worship time and space, consider doing identical activities at each of the services. The same gift can be given for each service, a practical necessity that will be understood by the pastor. Different speakers may be selected to best represent the specific worshipping group, unless there is a natural choice to cover all the services.

If the worshipping communities from various services move more fluidly between services and are less ingrained to ‘their’ worship time slot and space, consider having one super sized service on a chosen Sunday. People will understand and welcome the temporary adjustment to schedule and format.

Task: Arrange for a speaker(s) to use some worship time on the former pastor’s last Sunday to provide for a fond farewell with worshipful dignity and class.

Coordinator for this task: _____

4. Put Day-to-day Administration in the hands of others for a brief time

Try to put as much of the administration of the church as possible, the day-to-day details, in the hands of other staff or volunteers for as long as it is feasible to do so. This allows the church to run as efficiently as possible permitting the new pastor to focus more heavily on relationships and visitation instead of having to manage every meeting, every bit of paperwork early in the first week. This also allows for some level and consistent decision making until the new pastor is acclimated.

Task: Arrange for assignment of routine tasks of administration to be handled by staff and volunteers for the immediate few weeks or months.

Coordinator for this task: _____

5. Making A Leadership Notebook

It would helpful if all the staff, paid and key volunteers, would take a moment to write out two things; a two paragraph biography of themselves, and a concise description of their job/role/ministry within the church organization. These information sheets, one page per person is plenty, (maybe with a photo) can be put into a Personnel Notebook and given to the pastor when he or she is ready to receive it.

Task: Arrange for staff to write a one page bio/role description and put them in a notebook.

Coordinator for these tasks: _____

6. Letters of Thanksgiving At the Time of Departure

A big brown envelope or a decorated shoebox full of letters of ‘good luck’, ‘farewell’, and ‘well wishes’, is a clever thing to put in the hands of the pastor and each person of the family as they drive away from the church for the last time.

Task: Invite people to write a letter of thanksgiving for inclusion in a gift box or envelope that will be handed to the appropriate persons as they drive away.

Coordinator for this task: _____

7. Say Good-bye Early

Check into the validity of making the last Sunday of a pastor’s tenure the Sunday before annual conference, or two. It’s confusing to pack for annual conference and be gone for a few days right at ‘departure’ time, and then come back for that last week! Consider giving the pastor a special gift of the last week or two for his or her own purposes. There is plenty to do and the buffer between pastors allows for the congregation to do some things to heal themselves and prepare for the next chapter in their lives too.

Task: Discuss the possibilities with your District Superintendant, your Lay Leader, and your pastor. See if there isn’t a way to negotiate some extra time between pastorates that doesn’t cost the pastor and family extra money.

Coordinator for this task: _____

8. Provide a list of churches in the community.

Include the pastor’s names and phone numbers; highlight the names of those in charge of the ministerial association or those on-call when a pastor is out of town.

Task: Collect data on the other pastors in the community, a few contact details, and any dates and locations of an area clergy meeting the new pastor might join.

Coordinator for this task: _____

CONGREGATIONS CHECK LIST FOR THE INCOMING PASTOR AND FAMILY

1. Pray for guidance and grace.

Begin praying daily for the new pastor and family, even as you continue to pray for your departing pastor and family.

2. Order signage, cards, and plan publicity

Order a new desk plate and/or doorplate with the new pastor's name. This includes a panel for any street signage as well. Include a welcome message on the street sign beginning on the Conference Move Day.

Get pertinent cell numbers ahead of time and discuss with the new pastor the proper spelling of name, (be sure to clarify titles, formal and informational name preference and the use of initials.), and desired designs (let the new pastor choose his or her own design.) If appropriate, order new stationary, business cards, and personalized note cards for personal correspondence. All this should be on the pastor's desk upon arrival.

Also, depending on your situation and community, contact a local news organization and run a quick story of the new pastor with a picture.

Contact new pastor and get proper spelling of name, (be sure to clarify titles, formal and informational name preference and the use of initials.), desired designs, order stationary and cards.

Coordinator for this task: _____

3. Coordinate "Letters of Welcome"

As soon as the new pastor is identified, have various persons in the congregation write notes of welcome at random times until the family arrives. This is especially valuable if children of the congregation write to any children in the pastor's family, teens write teens, and so on. These initial contacts can be very meaningful and comforting. Encourage the congregation to offer personal invitations to get to know the family after they move in.

Task: Have church members write notes of welcome to new pastor prior to arriving at the parsonage.

Coordinator for this task: _____

4. Make sure to "Warm The House"

If there is a parsonage that needs attention, (in matters of paint, carpet, etc.) this needs to be anticipated by the Trustees. If things are not ready for occupation by the time of "move day," arrangements for quality temporary housing needs to be anticipated. DO NOT PUT THE NEW PASTOR'S FAMILY IN SOMEONE'S HOME AS TEMPORARY LODGING - FIND A NICE MOTEL SUITE NEAR BY.

Have Trustees inspect the parsonage, plan any updates and repairs, and make sure work is done as soon as possible.

Standing Rule D. 4. Care of Parsonages - Clergy shall use care to maintain cleanliness and good housekeeping of the parsonages in which they reside. In addition to the annual inspection of the parsonage, Part V, Chapter Six, Section VI (§ 2532.4), at a time of change in pastoral appointment, there shall be an inspection of the parsonage by the pastor and the pastor/parish relations committee to determine the condition of the parsonage. Where there has been obvious abuse, replacement and/or repair shall be at the

pastor's expense. If pets are a part of the pastor's family, the expense for professional treatment for infestation and odor shall be the pastor's responsibility prior to moving out. Any disagreement concerning liability shall be addressed by a mediation committee to determine the ratio of responsibility. The decision of the mediation committee shall be binding on all parties. The mediation committee shall be composed of the district superintendent, a person of the church's (charge's) choice, a person of the pastor's choice, and a neutral person selected by the district superintendent.

Task: Have Trustees inspect the parsonage, plan any updates and repairs, and make sure work is done as soon as possible.

Coordinator for this task: _____

5. Remember the Children

Where there are children moving, it is so kind to specifically welcome them as you plan the "homecoming" to your parsonage. One family reports how meaningful it was to arrive in the new home and find a well-known "friend" waiting for their 3 year old son...yes there was a beautiful fruit basket and a blooming plant. But when they went into the child's bathroom and there on the counter was Woody - a big stuffed cartoon character from his favorite movie, Toy Story! What wonderful feelings were on display about the kindness of a congregation that cared for even the least in the family.

With some children entering school in less than a month after a move, this can be a lonely summer in many ways. How delightful to identify someone who can be in charge of the preacher's kids assimilation. A parent perhaps with a child that age might be a natural choice.

Task: Have someone do a little homework with the incoming family and discern what might help pave the way for a pleasant surprise for the child(ren) of the family as they arrive to their strange new surroundings.

Coordinator for this task: _____

6. Paying for the Move

The cost of moving the new pastor is the responsibility of the church "receiving" the pastor. Contact the incoming pastor as soon as you are allowed to do so, and offer whatever help and support you can in this process. (Standing Rule # 18) *D. 3. Moving Day and Expenses - Moving Day for pastors shall ordinarily be Thursday of the week following the regular session of the annual conference; provided, if unusual circumstances prevail, the cabinet may change the date to a more suitable one; provided, further, the secretary of the cabinet shall have notice of the change published in the North Georgia Advocate not less than thirty (30) days prior to the convening of the annual conference. Departing clergy shall vacate their parsonages by one o'clock on the afternoon of Moving Day. District superintendents shall encourage the pastoral charges to pay moving expenses for newly assigned clergy moving within the bounds of the North Georgia Conference.*

If it can be determined what needs the family may have, consider a house warming of appropriate gifts or a perhaps a "Pounding" (one pound of grocery staples like potatoes, onions, flour, sugar, but don't overlook some of the more creative possibilities such as a pound of nails, garbage bags, etc., whatever people can think of.)

Task: Communicate with the incoming pastor about how to manage the costs of the move that is fair and equitable for both parties in terms of costs. Plan a fun way to welcome the new pastor and family as they move into the new parsonage/community.

Coordinator for this task: _____

7. Provide Time to Acclimate – Out of the Office or...

The First Week

Some 'buffer' time between leaving one church and coming to another may be helpful to the new pastor, especially if the family has children at home. The new surroundings, neighborhood, routine, etc. are matters that have to be acclimated to. Unfortunately the pastor is often pressured into immediate attendance at the church office leaving the family to move in, unpack, find stores, schools, etc. alone. Acclimatizing to a new setting is best done as a full family, when possible. Consider the positive impact of allowing some time for the new parsonage occupants to be a family at this high stress time.

This is NOT to suggest the new pastor isolate him or herself to the parsonage for as long as it takes to 'get comfortable' before showing up at the church. What is being suggested is a balance; acknowledging a bit of a double bind. On one hand there is on the part of the pastor a desire and expectation to get to work at the new office the very first moment the keys are handed over. On the other hand there is also a desire to be a good spouse/parent in a time of family upheaval. Neither task should be wholly sacrificed for the other. Rather ask what form of balance works for everyone; pastor, family, church, leadership, staff, and others.

Acknowledge there is a time for the new pastor to come to the office, meet and greet staff, take up key tasks and offer direction as needed, and there is a time for the pastor to be with family as they settle into a novel new place; often in the same day, for several days. Coach the church and leadership to understand and work with this level of grace. By stating tolerances about schedule up front, assumptions and judgments about the new pastor are managed rather than left to run rampant as he or she negotiates any 'moving in' pressures of the first few weeks in the new appointment.

Task: Make sure the church runs smoothly while the new pastor vacillates between working at the church and being at home with the family.

Coordinator for this task: _____

8. Provide Worship Time for the Congregation to Acclimate

Typically pastor's all shift on 'move day,' the Thursday after annual conference meets. Normally the present pastor preaches on the Sunday immediately following annual conference, moves out on Thursday of that week, the new pastor moves in and preaches his or her first sermon on the second Sunday following annual conference. This is standard operating procedure. However, our standard process is a bit lacking in terms of acknowledging the emotional impact of moving from place to place. As people of an itinerant methodology, we should have the best processes possible for making healthy transitions.

One improvement to the transition would be setting aside two consecutive Sunday worship services, the one just prior to annual conference, and the one immediately after annual conference. (This would mean that the leaving pastor would have an earlier departure date than normal, making his or her last Sunday in the pulpit the Sunday two weeks before annual conference.)

The worship for these back-to-back Sunday services should be done with laity leading and preaching and no appointed pastor present. Select key laity leaders (one for each of the two weeks) from the congregational family who speak and communicate well, and are highly respected by the worshipping community. There are two critical issues, one for each of the two Sundays which should be considered:

1) On the first Lay Sunday say goodbye to the former. The lay speaker would lead the congregation in sorting through their feelings about the former pastor. Acknowledging feelings of grief (or whatever) are normal. Share a few laughs, a few stories, a few failings, and help the “worshipping” congregation say farewell in a healthy and thoughtful manner to the former pastor, which can be done well without the new pastor present. Saying goodbye often is marginalized and substituted with feelings of denial. It is much better to spend a short time, laity to laity, offering scriptural guidance for grieving and letting go.

2) On the second Lay Sunday say hello to what it means to be receiving new leadership, again not with a pastor present in the service. Help the congregation open their hearts and minds to new possibilities with a new pastor for a new era of leadership. Help the congregation make a mental shift to freshness and renewal. Guide them to understand that while change is at times frightening, it’s almost always good when we look back. Help prepare them to receive, hear, support, and patiently care for the new pastor. Be especially sensitive in lifting up prayers and suggestions for a spirit of warmth and welcoming.

One of the key strengths here is having laity lead the process with dignity and honesty. Clergy, sometimes seen more as professionals than real people, have a harder time saying what needs to be said without it sounding self-serving or self-deprecating. When a congregation hears from a person respected and known lay leader, it can be very helpful.

If you can arrange for only one Sunday where laity lead; divide the above two tasks using two speakers in the same worship service. It’s less effective but it’s still better than pretending people are simply replaceable parts in the UM itinerant church machine.

If the congregation has more than one service per Sunday, there are two considerations. If the people who attend each service have a significant identification with ‘their’ specific worship time and space, consider doing identical activities at each of the services. Different speakers may be selected to best represent the specific worshipping group, unless there is a natural choice to cover all the services.

If the worshipping communities from various services move more fluidly between services and are less ingrained to their worship time slot and space, consider having one super sized service on a chosen Sunday. People will understand and welcome the temporary adjustment to schedule and format.

Task: Identify speaker(s) for Sunday(s) when no appointed pastor is present. Arrange for laity to lead all other aspects of the service; liturgy, music, sermon, prayers, etc.)

Coordinator for the above task: _____

9. The New Pastor’s First Sunday – Preaching Only

The new pastor has NO IDEA of the rhythm of worship at a new location. While we are a connected denomination, and much of the structure is similar from church to church, each congregation has its own worship “comfort zone.” Because a new pastor has no idea of a churches worship traditions the pastor by default ends up ‘changing’ things without even meaning too. To avoid this scenario on the pastor’s first Sunday, plan for each role, except the sermon, to be presented by laity who can do the worship parts well.

The intent is to give the new pastor a chance to see and hear worship as it's normally done, and thereby allowing him or her to get a feeling before having to step totally into leadership. This could actually go on for a few weeks or until the new pastor has a good grasp and sense of 'normal' for the congregation, and if multiple services are involved, having a few extra weeks of this approach allows time to address each different setting specifically.

Task: Sign up lay leaders to handle all worship tasks except sermon.
Coordinator for this task: _____

10. Welcoming the New Pastor as Part of Worship

The first worship service with the new family present should include a ritual of welcome. This could include the ritual printed in the UM Book of Worship for Receiving a New Pastor. (A Book of Worship is available from Cokesbury.)

The introductions of the pastor and family should be a meaningful part of the service. Gifts of welcome and gifts that show acceptance of the appointment are appropriate. A new stole is a nice suggestion...or a new Bible as a symbol of the congregation's willingness to be led by this person, or both and more. Consider an official "church" stole that is removed from the departing pastor in a sensitive ceremony and placed on the new pastor all as a way of showing the leadership mantle has been moved from one to another. In a less formal way, perhaps simply presenting them his or her "new" business cards or other forms of greeting is enough.

Review the ritual in the Book of Worship, prepare the necessary gifts, and identify the necessary speakers and presenters as the ritual calls for. Make sure there is time in the worship service for the ritual.

Task: Review the ritual in the Book of Worship, prepare the necessary gifts, and identify the necessary speakers and presenters as the ritual calls for. Make sure there is time in the worship service for the ritual.
Coordinator for this task: _____

11. A Reception Line is Always Appropriate

On the first Sunday, the pastor and his or her family have an opportunity to meet and greet in a formal reception line. This can be done well, or poorly, depending on how much thought is put into it. Some folks like the single line approach, where folks wait for a turn to shake hands and exchange greetings and names. This works in smaller situations where the line has the potential of moving along within reasonable limits. In a larger congregation, this line can grow quite long and the wait can reach into the hours. Long lines can also clog up hallways and doorways, making any movement of people nearly embarrassing to manage.

A few moments of thought may provide the best way of allowing folks to mill around the refreshments until the line is down to a few folks, and then they can step in and take a turn. In this way the line is more manageable, people don't perish for lack of a drink and a sweet treat to keep energy up while they wait, and those who have less time can push forward a bit more quickly allowing those who have a more time to wait a bit, chatting with others in the room.

Put folks alongside the new pastor (and his or her family) who know most of the people in the congregation. Consider placing a "prompter" down the line who makes sure each person has a name tag, and is engaged conversationally in such a way that they can be reminded that this is just a quick greeting

(as opposed to a recital of family history, who knows who and from where, etc.) Prompters can make sure to pass any important details to the greeters at the side of the pastor so they can assist in making the greeting of each person as meaningful as possible.

One church set up a video recorder at the end of the reception line to greet the new pastor. Each person/couple/family stopped in front of the camera long enough to smile and give their name for the record. The video was then provided to the new pastor and family for review in the days and weeks after to remember, double check, and work on names and faces. Remembering everything at the moment is impossible and this was a great way to maximize the experience.

The golden rule is to keep this a time of dignity without becoming tedious and overly long.

Task: Set up a receiving line and refreshments for the first Sunday the pastor is present.
Coordinator for this task: _____

12. Provide the "First Week of Meals" and Keep Some Distance

Boxes, boxes, everywhere boxes. To minimize stress, full meals – including disposable plates, plastic glasses and silverware, etc. could be dropped by the parsonage. Breakfasts can be fresh fruit, or sweet rolls and juices, or something similar. Lunches can be sandwiches from a store or homemade, it doesn't matter much. A whole day's provisions may be dropped off mid-day. In any case, provide a meal until the pastor's home "kitchen" is in order and they can easily provide for themselves.

If there are very small children, babysitting help might be greatly appreciated. If there are children who might be more under foot than helpful in the unpacking process, offer to have church families take them for a time, Six Flags, or Whitewater, if the new family is comfortable with such suggestions.

Adults may offer to help the new family unpack, but don't be surprised if it's rejected – a good deal of trust is called for to have unknown persons sift through personal belongings, box by box. Just providing time for the adults of the new parsonage family to work through unpacking together may be enough of a gift.

It is also a gift if a person with a truck comes by each evening and offers to cart off the empty boxes and other items that are to be discarded.

Task: Arrange for meals for the first few days, or until the unpacking is well in hand. Check to see if any help is needed in the unpacking process.
Coordinator for this task: _____

13. The Personal Finance Paperwork

As soon as is appropriate, the key financial officer of the church should arrange to sit with the pastor and exchange all necessary information for payroll, pension, deductions, etc. Caution: if it's helpful to include the spouse at this time, plan for his/her participation. All decisions and agreements should be put in writing and signed by both parties. Make a note of birthdays, anniversaries, etc. for church publication at a later time.

Be aware this is NOT the time to unload all the news and blues of the churches financial status. That function should be done at a later time. This step can actually be done before the move actually takes place...discreetly.

Especially vital is making sure the pastor has income in a timely manner during the first four weeks. Some churches pay ahead for two weeks, some ahead for a month...some pay after. Depending on what type of payroll situation a pastor is coming from and what kind he or she is entering into, it can be a long time between salary checks. Do what you can to keep the family from being financially 'stranded' while waiting for the first paycheck to come through. There is no official policy on how pastors get paid, per week, per month, paid forward, or paid for time served. It's important to check this detail.

Standing Rule #21 - Your present church should pay you for the whole month of June. The Annual Conference Service Year is July 1 – June 30. Your salary in your new appointment will begin July 1.

Consider generating a short list of people in the area, or from the church, who have specific skills they may find beneficial.... mechanic, doctors, day care provider, baby-sitter, carpenter, plumber, etc.)

Task: Make sure all salary, tax, and family information is updated and all questions are answered in regards to income.

Coordinator for this task: _____

14. Guide the "Community Tour"

In the first few days, or even immediately before taking residence, it would be extremely helpful for someone from the church with a large vehicle to take the new family on a full tour of the area, citing places of growth, sharing history, and giving insights to the community history and future; it's people, problems, and such. Schools, shops, etc. should be included.

A separate tour for pastor can be done on a subsequent day to orient him or her to the hospitals, nursing homes, nearby churches, etc. Likewise, a separate tour for the spouse that highlights his or her needs could be helpful too.

Give gift certificates to several of your favorite restaurants in the community.

Task: Arrange for the new pastor to have a tour of the community. Arrange for the family to get the same treatment for what they would like to see as well.

Coordinator for this task: _____

15. Make a Point of Visiting with the Pastor's Spouse

Make time to ease the transition for the spouse, either with an intentional contact through the SPRC or a specifically recruited contact through the transition team. A simple act of taking this person to lunch and just talking/listening can make a world of difference on a number of helpful levels. Ask how the move is impacting him or her, the family, other relationships with extended family. Or for a newly arriving mother, you might ask over a meal, "What is it you need/want as it pertains to the family and the new surroundings." You could also have someone offer to be an "aide" to him or her, a phone buddy, or a ride to unfamiliar places. Anything to heighten the awareness of how difficult a move can be on the family of the pastor...including helping the pastor realize this as well.

Task: Arrange for a person to be an aide-de-camp to the pastor's spouse for a short time; an occasional lunch, a daily phone check-in buddy, a free ride as needed, etc.

Coordinator for this task: _____

16. Plan a "Welcome Banquet"

A special "all church" welcome banquet should be planned, and it may be that a Sunday after church isn't the best time. Whatever date/time is selected take pains to promote the date as early as possible and anticipate this occasion with humor, fun, and warmth. Providing a festive celebratory atmosphere is appropriate. There is some merit to doing a little sleuth work and learn what the favorite "church" meal of the new parsonage family might be. If the meal isn't appropriate for mass serving, perhaps a specific favorite food, i.e., dessert, or beverage, can be served as a gesture of thoughtfulness. It would be an easy and fun surprise as part of a larger great time of celebration.

Task: Plan the welcome banquet, food, and entertainment, for the new parsonage family.
Coordinator for this task: _____

17. Walk Through the Church Finances

In the first week of office work, set up a meeting where the new pastor and the Chair of finance, and other key chairpersons, can talk frankly and confidentially about the churches financial condition, stewardship health, investments, etc. This should be done with a minimum of three people so as to avoid the perception of one person manipulating the situation.

Provide an honest review of the church's spiritual health and an honest and "open book" review of church financial status.

Make plans for the pastor, finance committee chairperson, and the church treasurer to attend the *Great Start Workshop for the Finance Team*. Look at the conference web site for details; www.ngumc.org

Task: Honest review of the church's spiritual health.
Coordinator for this task: _____

Task: Honest and "open book" review of church financial status.
Coordinator for this task: _____

18. Calendar Clearing, Working Styles, and Priorities

In the first week of office work, (which may be the second week of residency) the Administrative assistant (secretary, if there is one associated with the church) should identify time to accomplish the following:

- Calendar coordination
- Upcoming meetings
- Office protocols

Make plans for the pastor and administrative assistant to attend the *Great Start Workshop for Pastors and Administrative Professionals*. Look at the conference web site for details; www.ngumc.org

Task: Review the upcoming church calendar and areas needing attention. Make plans for the pastor and administrative assistant to attend the Great Start Workshop at Simpsonwood.
Coordinator for this task: _____

19. Set up "Neighborhood Welcome Groups"

One person should be assigned to set up regional "welcome" gatherings at various members' homes. Hosts should be selected based on their involvement in the life of the church as much as possible: this gets the pastor into the homes of the active folks as soon as possible. Also, other members attending can learn where some of their key church leaders live. The gathering should start at a certain time, and people should be encouraged to be present on time as much as possible (as opposed to a walk through where people come and go at leisure) the evening should conclude within 1.5 hours, maximum.

Every person on the total church mailing list should be divided into regions with a host/hostess for each area. Each person on the subsequent lists should receive a short invitation from their assigned host/hostess in a hand-addressed envelope. Do not rely only on word of mouth, or just notices in the bulletin, or email/phone calls; instead, use all of these.

The welcome meetings should be in the evenings, as appropriate, and should be set up over a 4 to 6 week period. One or two person(s) should volunteer to travel to all the gatherings with the pastor (and spouse when appropriate) – stay for the gathering – and handle all matters of introducing the new pastor and (spouse.) It's important that this person be able to attend all gatherings to provide continuity and reflection from a consistent perspective.

This task can become cumbersome if not thought through. The pastor will be exhausted if dozens of house meetings rather than a strategic handful of locations are planned, or if 2 hours of interaction is crammed into 1 hour of visiting; unless carefully planned, what is meant as a gift can become a chore. The point is to offer a way for the pastor to meet and greet the bulk of the congregation without making it a grueling marathon. It may be helpful to consult with the new pastor for input on this particular step to get some ideas and feedback before launching a full scale plan.

Nametags must be provided for all guests and worn at all times.

Task: Set up the gatherings and make sure the pastor/family get to each on time.
Coordinator for this task: _____

20. Provide a "Shut-in" Tour

In the first few days, someone familiar with the pastoral needs of the church should take the new pastor to visit all shut-in's and elderly that could benefit from a visit. Also included on this portion of the trip, if not covered in another way, is a drive by of all the area hospitals that your congregation uses. Homemade maps should be provided if helpful, or a GPS would make a nice welcome gift if the new pastor hasn't already purchased one.

Task: Arrange for pastor to visit shut-in's and nursing homes in the community.
Coordinator for this task: _____

21. Set up "Meet the Chairperson" Meals or Coffees

Each program ministry chairperson should be contacted and arrangements made to coordinate with the new pastor's schedule. These meetings should take place within weeks 2 to 4 or as is reasonable to do so.

These meetings shouldn't be about official church business where grand visions are unpacked, or goals reviewed. (Business matters should be reviewed at later meetings.) This first visit with each Chairperson

should be a relationship building visit only. "Who are you, what keeps you busy, family stories..." etc. Keep it simple.

It is suggested that one person attend each setting with the pastor and chair(s) for purposes of continuity and facilitation. Each chairperson should first be thought of in terms of a private visit with the new pastor, but in setting up an appointment for each person, consider bunching a few together (no more than five at a table including the pastor and facilitator,) if and when appropriate. It is understandable these introductions, done one at a time, day after day after day, can be taxing, making a good thing into a hard thing. Look over your Chairperson list, keep 'oil' and 'water' on different dates, but there is likely no problem with 'water' and 'water' sitting down together, 'oil' and 'oil' together, (especially for larger congregations) if it speeds up the process a bit.

It's important everyone in the church is clear these meetings with the chairs aren't mini power meals for personal agendas. Speak of it intentionally as relationship building to reassure others. This is why one trusted person should attend all sessions with the pastor. If the congregation and leadership are confident these meetings are limited to building relationships, no one needs to worry someone is having the new pastor's ear.

Bottom line: Set up meal/coffee meetings with various chairpersons and the pastor; let the pastor have some say in the scheduling of these meetings. The sooner these meetings are set up the more likely they will happen.

Task: Set up meal/coffee meetings with various chairpersons and the pastor; let the pastor have some say in the scheduling of these meetings. The sooner these meetings are set up the more likely they will happen. Coordinator for this task: _____

22. If There is Staff Support, Plan a Short Retreat

Within 4 to 8 weeks of the new pastor's arrival, it would be helpful to have a 'soft' plan for a staff get-away, to work out details, concerns, plans, and relationships. This is a retreat that may be best led by someone gifted in matters of group process, someone not related to the congregation or to the new or previous pastor, though much of the structure should be shaped by desires of the new pastor. Retreat details from A to Z, should be handled by someone on the staff in consultation with the pastor. Too often the new pastor has no idea where to begin with the structure (formal or informal) of the new congregation to pull off such a critical event early in the appointment.

If you are moving to a church with other clergy staff, Make plans to attend the *Great Start Workshop for Pastors-Associates*. Look at the conference web site for details; www.ngumc.org

Task: Set up a full staff retreat; site, times, resources, etc.)
Coordinator for this task: _____

23. Have PPRC Do Extra "Follow Up Meetings"

The PPRC should work hard in the first 6 months to make sure the new pastor is getting the support and resources necessary to get involved and be effective. This means more meetings than usual, some at the church, some in homes, and some informally over a meal at a restaurant. Many shorter meetings are better than fewer long ones. Help the pastor feel supported and connected to the PPRC. Listen to the

needs articulated. Help the pastor to hear the needs articulated by the congregation. This intensity of meetings should last up to the Christmas holidays.

Adopt a list of meeting dates for the committee and pastor to handle small matters while they're small and to make sure questions are being handled.

Task: Adopt a list of meeting dates for the committee and pastor to handle small matters while they're small and to make sure questions are being handled.

Coordinator for this task: _____

24. Go Over the Pastor's Calendar Dates As Soon As Possible

There may be a family vacation or continuing education planned as part of the pastor's/family summer that was set up before the move was known to anyone. Review the calendar with the pastor to honor important dates as it applies to the church and to the pastor. Some grace and tolerance will be needed if there is conflict – making adjustments to expectations is typically easily understood by all involved.

Arrange for the PPRC Chairperson to review big calendar dates and events with the new pastor as soon as possible and make a plan to accommodate the best path through in regards to plans made before anyone knew there was a move taking place. Be flexible.

Task: Arrange for the SPRC Chairperson to review big calendar dates and events with the new pastor as soon as possible and make a plan to accommodate the best path through in regards to plans made before anyone knew there was a move taking place. Be flexible.

Coordinator for this task: SPRC Chairperson

25. Plan a "First Anniversary Party"

On the first anniversary Sunday, a special celebration should be planned as a matter of encouragement and celebration. This is helpful because the first year is the toughest.

Task: Arrange for a special celebration, in worship? or as a meal afterward, or both?

Coordinator for this task: _____

QUICK SHEET OF FAREWELL TASKS

1. Task: Arrange for a special celebration.

Coordinator for this task: _____

2. Task: Arrange for an appropriate gift(s) for the pastor and his or her family.

Coordinator for this task: _____

3. Task: Arrange for a speaker to use some worship time on the former pastor's last Sunday to say a fond farewell with worshipful dignity and class.

Coordinator for this task: _____

4. Task: Arrange for assignment of routine tasks of administration to be handled by staff and volunteers for the immediate few weeks or months.

Coordinator for this task: _____

5. Task: Arrange for staff to write a one page bio/role description and put them in a notebook.

Coordinator for these tasks: _____

6. Task: Invite people to write a letter of thanksgiving for inclusion in a gift box or envelope that will be handed to the appropriate persons as they drive away.

Coordinator for this task: _____

7. Task: Discuss the possibilities with your District Superintendant, your Lay Leader, and your pastor. See if there isn't a way to negotiate some extra time between pastorates that doesn't cost the pastor and family extra money.

Coordinator for this task: _____

8. Task: Collect data on the other pastors in the community, a few contact details, and any dates and locations of an area clergy meeting the new pastor might join.

Coordinator for this task: _____

QUICK SHEET OF WELCOME TASKS

2. Task: Contact new pastor and get proper spelling of name, (be sure to clarify titles, formal and informational name preference and the use of initials.), desired designs, order stationary and cards.

Coordinator for this task: _____

3. Task: Have church members write notes of welcome to new pastor prior to arriving at the parsonage.

Coordinator for this task: _____

4. Task: Have Trustees inspect the parsonage, plan any updates and repairs, and make sure work is done as soon as possible.

Coordinator for this task: _____

5. Task: Plan a fun way to welcome the new pastor and family as they move into the new parsonage/community.

Coordinator for this task: _____

6. Task: Make sure the church runs smoothly while the new pastor vacillates between working at the church and being at home with the family. Allow for this rhythm without pressures.

Coordinator for this task: _____

7. Task: Identify speaker(s) for Sunday(s) when the no appointed pastor is present. Arrange for laity to lead all other aspects of the service; liturgy, music, sermon, prayers, etc.)

Coordinator for the above task: _____

8. Task: Sign up lay leaders to handle all worship tasks except sermon.

Coordinator for this task: _____

9. Task: Review the ritual in the Book of Worship, prepare the necessary gifts, and identify the necessary speakers and presenters as the ritual calls for. Make sure there is time in the worship service for the ritual.

Coordinator for this task: _____

10. Task: Set up a receiving line and refreshments for the first Sunday the pastor is present.

Coordinator for this task: _____

11. Task: Arrange for meals for the first few days, or until the unpacking is well in hand. Check to see if any help is needed in the unpacking process.

Coordinator for this task: _____

12. Task: Make sure all salary, tax, and family information is updated and all questions are answered in regards to income.

Coordinator for this task: _____

13. Task: Arrange for the new pastor to have a tour of the community. Arrange for the family to get the same treatment for what they would like to see as well.

Coordinator for this task: _____

14. Task: Plan the welcome banquet, food, and entertainment, for the new parsonage family.
Coordinator for this task: _____

15a. Task: Honest review of the church's spiritual health.
Coordinator for this task: _____

15b. Task: Honest and "open book" review of church financial status. Sign up your finance team for the Great Start on Finances event, look at the conference web site for details; www.ngumc.org
Coordinator for this task: _____

16. Task: Review the upcoming church calendar and areas needing attention. Make plans for the pastor and administrative assistant to attend the Great Start Workshop. Look at the conference web site for details; www.ngumc.org
Coordinator for this task: _____

17. Task: Set up the gatherings and make sure the pastor/family get to each on time.
Coordinator for this task: _____

18. Task: Arrange for pastor to visit shut-in's and nursing homes in the community.
Coordinator for this task: _____

19. Task: Set up lunch meetings with various chairpersons and the pastor; let the pastor have some say in the scheduling of these meetings. The sooner these meetings are set up the more likelihood they'll happen.
Coordinator for this task: _____

20. Task: Set up a full staff retreat; site, times, resources, etc.)
Coordinator for this task: _____

21. Task: Adopt a list of meeting dates for the committee and pastor to handle small matters while they're small and to make sure questions are being handled.
Coordinator for this task: _____

22. Task: Arrange for the SPRC Chairperson to review big calendar dates and events with the new pastor as soon as possible and make a plan to accommodate the best path through in regards to plans made before anyone knew there was a move taking place. Be flexible.
Coordinator for this task: SPRC Chairperson _____

23. Task: Arrange for a special celebration, in worship? or as a meal afterward, or both?
Coordinator for this task: _____