

Ministerial Leader Transitions Handbook

If you are considering a transition in your ministerial leadership assignment, we suggest that you read this handbook prior to making your decision. It contains many important resources for the transition, as well as giving you an idea of where your transition may take you.

This handbook serves three main purposes:

1. To tell you what we are telling the churches in their search for new ministerial leadership. You need to have an understanding of the process region staff is seeking to lead churches through.
2. To offer a process for reflection and consideration of your ministry. This reflection will hopefully inform decisions in an upcoming transition in ministry.
3. Because individuals don't move very often and because we as regions have expectations of your participation in the process, we, as a region, want to express our expectations and offer you our full assistance.

We hope these tools are useful to you in your process.

-ABC/Dakotas

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1. When to Stay and When to Go

When to stay or when to go is often the hardest decision of ministry. An objective discussion of a spiritual decision is going to sound like double talk. For instance, considering what is best for one's family could be a reason to stay or to go. For thinkers, a list of reasons to stay and a list of reasons to go can help.

For "Feelers," getting in touch with the "unsettledness" or the "peace" can help.

*Seek the Lord.
Seek your inner self.
Seek input from your spouse and, if possible, your family.
Seek wise council.
Finally, seek confirmation from the Lord.*

After a decision is made to stay or to go, there will often be an element of unsettledness or risk. That just might be the faith component of waiting on the Lord to finish the process you are in the middle of.

One default is to seek God's will by seeking a call to a new ministry. If you aren't called to a new place, it could be said that you are still called where you are. This can be very risky because we might be seduced by "the greener grass syndrome." The codicil to that is the unfortunate reality that there is no guaranteed employment. Some folks fall out of professional ministry. It's the form of one's ministry that we are called to, or the sharing of grace and mercy.

There is a very useful book by John R. Cionca and Calvin Miller titled ***Red Light, Green Light: Discerning the Time for a Change in Ministry***. Unfortunately, it is out of print, but would be a great help if you can find it.

When to Stay:

- **When the Lord says so:**
"It's supposed to be work."
- **When ministry is happening and lives are being changed.**
When God is working, ministries are accomplishing their goal.
- **When the church is at a critical point.**
Building program, loss of key leader, growth not assimilated. If God used us to start something, there are times when ethically we need to stay to stabilize or finish "it." If you are in a good strategic position to move now, the same will probably be true in a year.
- **When it is best for your family.**
Our families are often better off if we can allow them stable school life and employment opportunities. It is not selfish when we balance the needs of professional development, family issues and service to a local church. When it is balance everyone can be in a win/win position.
- **When the church has been at this point before and not worked through the issues.**
If lay leadership and significant portions of the congregation are willing to address the issues and attempt a positive solution, it might be best to stay. God did not give us the power or authority to "make it happen," but we are to point the way. We may need to stay and point the way for the issues to be resolved.
- **Until we are released to move.**
This is not the same thing as being restless or stressed. When we have the sense our time is finished at the church, it is time to go.

When to Go:

- **When the Lord says so.**

“It is not supposed to work.”

- **When they aren't buying what you are selling.**

Ministry is for seasons, and like the changing of our climatic seasons, the first signs are often hard to spot. As the professionals, we must watch for the first “yellowing of leaves” or unrestrainable movements of migration.

- **When you don't have skills to take a church where it needs to go and don't want to learn or don't have time.**

Sometimes we take a church as far as we can with our gifts and skills. I have seen folks grow a church larger than they could pastor. Possibly your ministry is to move a church from point B to point C. If that is the case, why should you try to take them to point D? Some folks help churches build facility. Some help churches build relationships. Others help churches through conflict. Do what you do well.

In some circumstances, the church might not have 2 years for you to build a new skill base. It might be best for the church—and for you—to recognize that.

- **When you have outgrown the system or it is no longer a challenge.**

As our skills, experience, and expertise grows the same challenges and demands of ministry may no longer feed us and challenge us. This might not be burnout—it might be a transition stage from one style of ministry to another, from one type of church to another.

- **When it is best for your family.**

If the current church won't likely be able to provide the opportunity for your children to complete middle school and high school, it might be best to move before high school. Does your current situation allow your spouse to fulfill their employment goals and needs?

- **When relationships have been damaged beyond repair.**

If it was our doing or not, relationships can be breeched in such a way they can't be mended. Often when significant families or very cohesive groups are stressed by divided loyalties the church can become paralyzed.

- **When you can't financially afford to stay and the church can't or won't pay a living wage.**

The church doesn't owe you anything beyond what they agreed to do. They may owe the Lord more, but not you. Often as clergy we believe a church will change and support us as we think they ought to—but often they do not.

- **When the Kingdom needs your gifts and talents somewhere else.**

There might come a time when your gifts are needed in another form of ministry or another place. The temptation is to stay where we are secure and comfortable, but is that the call of God?

Reasons I think/feel I should stay:

Reasons I think/feel I should go:

2. Ministry Context / Church Type

An essential piece of stewardship of our call to ministry is skill building. We need to use and grow all of the gifts that God has given us. This is important within the context of our current ministry and in the context of being prepared for where we are called to serve in the future.

The experience in ministry that we accumulate should raise our expectation of our self. I am sure that it raises the expectations of churches and our Lord. We need to be aware that different churches, as well as different sizes and styles of churches, demand an expanding skill set. A Family Church (0-50) takes one set of skills. A Pastoral Church (50-150) requires the previous skills and more. The Corporate Church (150-350) again requires all the previous skills and again more.

Have you developed a "portfolio" of skills to use in your future ministries?

These are the skills required for effective ministry:

A "Family Church" will require:

Core ministry skills and Pastoral skills	Preaching, Caring, Nurturing
CE Programming, Relationship Building	Youth Ministry Faithfulness
Music Ministry Consistency	Children's Ministry Presence

A "Pastoral Church" will require:

Core ministry skills, Pastoral Skills and Administrative Skills	Preaching, Caring, Nurturing and Organization
CE Programming, Relationship Building and Follow Through	Youth Ministry Faithfulness and Multitasking
Music Ministry Consistency and Communication	Children's Ministry Presence and Power Foci

A "Corporation Church" will require additional skills like:

Leadership	Shared Ministry
Cast a Vision	Ability to Work Through Others
Use Process	Trust
Interpersonal Communication	Accountability

Here are some essential questions to ask yourself:

What has worked well for you in your current ministry?

- Church leadership style:
- Your leadership role:
- Culture and community:
- Worship:
- Scope of ministry:
- Team ministry:
- Supervising / being supervised:

What have you struggled with?

- Church leadership style:
- Your leadership role:
- Culture and community:
- Worship:
- Scope of ministry:
- Team ministry:
- Supervising / being supervised:

Do you have the whole Skill Set you need for where you want to go next and feel by God's leadership you should go?

What aspect of your ministry do you need to grow in or develop?

What needs to be different in the context or structure of your next ministry?

What do you not want to be a part of your next ministry?

What are the four primary things that must be present in your next ministry?

What style or size church do you feel you want to go to and why?

Does your skill set meet the requirements for where you seek to go?

3. Salary, Housing, and Benefits

At some point prior to accepting a trial weekend it will be necessary to have full discussion about salary, housing and benefits. If the committee doesn't make this part of some discussion, approach the chair and ask when they intend to address the issue. The logical place in the process would be following interview and preaching in neutral pulpit. Don't accept the trial weekend until you and the committee have finished these negotiations and both parties have agreed.

We suggest that the church approve a salary package for the search committee to work with. We ask them to build in some flexibility, but most often it is a \$3,000 or so range. That range is intended to address training, experience and need issues.

As Clergy, our piety, timidity and reluctance are significant factors contributing to low clergy salaries. If we are not careful we will say with our lips: "God will provide" and feel with our heart we are "victims of our call." Say what your realistic expectations are and enter into conversation about the matters.

Be sure that you ask for and receive the full contribution of the church to your M&M retirement. There is an alarming trend of pastors and/or churches under-reporting salary, housing and utilities in the calculation of their premium. This provides a short term savings for the church, but has long term negative impact on your retirement income. This also gives unrealistic expectations to a church of the real cost of funding ministry.

(Financial Worksheet on following pages)

Financial Worksheet

Current

Must Have!

COMPENSATION		
1. Cash salary		
Housing (either a or b):		
a. Parsonage rental value		
b. Housing allowance		
Utilities allowance		
Total Compensation		
BENEFITS		
ABC Retirement/Death Benefit Plans (16% of minister's total compensation)		
Medical and dental benefits		
Social Security/Medicare tax offset		
Total Benefits		

REIMBURSEMENT FOR MINISTRY-RELATED EXPENSES		
Automobile _____miles at ____: per mile		
Convention expenses		
Continuing education		
Books, periodicals, resources		
Hospitality fund		
Total Reimbursement for Ministry-Related Expenses		
Vacation		
Continuing Education		

4. Initiating and Focusing a Transition in Ministry

It is in your—and your family's—best interest for you to keep your ABPS profile current. Your ABPS profile is the core element in the search and call process used by all ABC regions.

At your earliest opportunity, call ABPS: 1-800-392-2343.

Update your profile, be sure to have correct phone numbers and professional specialties, identify the regions where you wish to be considered.

In ABC/Dakotas life, the Area Minister or Executive Minister is the starting point for a transition in ministry. Contact the Area Minister or Executive Minister to indicate your desire to move.

ABCD will ask for your updated ABPS profile. Committees are trained to interpret and use the ABPS profile, and not having one will not give you and your ministry even consideration by the committee. You will be required to have signed an ABC Code of Ethics and a Clergy Misconduct Disclaimer on file for your profile to be shared by ABC/Dakotas staff.

You will be asked what kind of ministry you feel God leading you toward and what kind of setting will be best for you and your family. Also, you will need to have considered what your financial needs are.

Your ABPS resume and the information you have shared will be presented to ABCD region staff during their staff meeting. Your name can then be submitted to ABCD churches where there is a match in professional specialties and financial parameters. If you are aware of an ABCD church searching for clergy and you would like to be considered by that church, ask an ABCD staff person to have your name submitted. We ask that you not contact the church directly, or through another person, but instead go through an ABCD staff person.

A quality move can take 6-18 months. Starting your search before you might have to leave your current situation is essential. If you sense immediate risk of termination, make sure your area minister or executive minister knows fully about your situation. Region staff will seek to intervene and ask the church to give you time to leave.

5. My Part of God's Process (Other than praying and listening)

The basic premise of these considerations is spiritual rather than professional. Where and how does God want you to use your gifts for ministry?

As in AA, do a fearless, moral inventory of your ministry skills, real commitment level, performance and capabilities. If you don't have a clue, how can a church? Make a candid and balanced assessment of your previous ministry. If you oversell yourself, you will soon be in significant trouble when you can't produce what you promised. It has been said 25% of folks move up, 50% move laterally and 25% move down in size and salary.

It may be useful to take a "Kingdom" look at your next ministry. Are there ministries other than the kind you have been doing that might serve the kingdom?

It is our hope that you will give us first chance here in the Dakotas to seek God's new place for you. Please let us know before or when you open your ABPS profile.

With a clear, realistic understanding of our ministry and your ABPS, prayerfully consider where you sense God is leading you. Are there geographic areas or specific regions that have been on your mind and your heart? Whether the ABC of the Dakotas or another region, contact region staff and find out what their requirements are for consideration. Follow up your contact with the region office with phone conversations with region staff. If time and distance allow, offer to come for a personal visit. Call every 3 or 4 months, to demonstrate a sustained interest in moving to that region. Here in the Dakotas, when you talk to one of us you have talked to all of us. That may not be the case in other regions.

The following are useful suggestions from Carroll Turner, former Executive Minister ABC of Rochester/Genessee Region.

So, how will you get my attention, and that of colleagues?

I offer:

1. Write to me by name, and spell it correctly.

2. State your career goal succinctly.

I want to know where and how you wish to use your gifts for ministry.

3. Complete the sentence in 25 words or less:

"What would really excite me in ministry is....." in 25 words or less.

4. Use the Ministry Opportunities Listing to make your requests more specific.

It will assist both of us in determining mutual interest.

5. Send your ABPS Profile and any additional information that will help.

6. List references with addresses and phone numbers, if you want to give me additional references.

7. Tell me "up front" if you are in a problem situation.

I need to know your context in order to be helpful, which I want to be.

8. Keep it simple, spell it right.

Poor writing and spelling create non-professional images in my perception of you.

9. Call me a few weeks after you have sent your material.

It will be a joy to talk with you and answer your questions, or ask some of my own.

10. Maintain a positive, hopeful, prayerful attitude during a potentially long process.

You will be led to a setting for ministry wherein your call will be fulfilled.

The above are the "10 suggestions" and not the "Ten Commandments," as there may be other ways to enhance the dialogue between the primary region staff and those seeking a change in ministry.

6. Search and Call of Ministerial Leadership

Because an individual congregation infrequently searches for pastoral leadership, they often lack experience in this important area of church life. ABC/Dakotas region staff will offer the search committee a process for assessing the needs and expectations of the church and identifying pastoral skills which will be needed to fulfill the ministry expectations of the congregation. Further, we will offer guidance in interviewing and focusing on a candidate to be presented to the church. This consulting ministry is one of process, allowing the Holy Spirit to focus the committee and the congregation on the individual our Lord is calling to that congregation.

As a clergy person seeking a call, it will be most helpful for you to understand what we are telling the churches.

Search and Call Ministry is designed to be a consultant service to a pastoral search committee. Our input is firmly rooted in the expectation that God is calling an individual to the church seeking a pastor. The core of the Search and Call approach is to identify the ministry needs and expectations of the congregation. The ABPS resume, used by American Baptist regions, assists clergy in developing their understanding of how God has gifted them for ministry. This potential matching is intended to allow God to speak through the congregation and through the candidates to the search committee.

These insights have been gained by experiences of about 6,000 churches in the last 30 years. It is a vital process that seeks to respond to the uniqueness of the needs of each church seeking a pastor. We serve with a clear commitment to the autonomy of the local church.

Overview of component elements:

1. Assist the congregation in gaining and articulating a clearer understanding of who they are. Develop demographic expression of existing church, descriptions of the worship components and decision making styles.
2. Counsel the search committee to identify a pastoral job description and salary range/compensation package which are approved by the church prior to consideration of a pastoral candidate.
3. Work with the search committee to prepare presentation material for potential candidates.
4. Identify the pastoral gifts and skills which will best serve and lead the congregation
5. Train the committee in accessing the descriptive material from pastoral candidates
6. Offer a proven process for focusing on the candidate to be presented to the church.
7. Identify the expectations and needs of the congregation with respect to spiritual gifts and ministry skills desired in the pastor to be called.
8. Provide a process for candidates selected by the committee to express their own understanding of how God has gifted them for ministry. Search and Call will work with names and resumes which have been gathered by the committee.
9. Train the committee in accessing the descriptive material from pastoral candidates
10. Provide training for search committee in preparation for interviewing candidates.
11. Offer a proven process for focusing on the final candidate to be presented to the church.
12. Assist the pastoral search committee in clarifying and communicating its task and process for the congregation

The following is an overview of the ministry search process:

- Minister resigns
- Search Committee formed
- Search Committee meets to organize
- Search Committee installed/dedicated
- Search Committee meets with Area Minister
- Training / distributes Church Reflections
- Search Committee completes Church Reflections
- ABC/Dakotas staff initiates ABPS Search
- The criteria are professional specialties, salary requirements
- Staff person presents the church and its needs to region staff meeting
- Receives suggestions from other staff persons.
- Staff person includes other names and finalizes the group of names to be submitted.
- Search Committee meets with Area Minister
- Receives names: usually 10-25
- Committee narrows prospects (to 3-5)
- Committee completes reference checks (on the 3-5)
- Committee conducts phone interviews and/or (on the 3-5)
- Committee conducts in-person interviews (on the 3-5)
- Committee arranges with staff person to hear prospects in neutral site (one or all of the 3-5)
- Committee might choose second interview
- Primary Candidate chosen
- Committee and Candidate complete negotiation on all details of call
- Candidating Weekend:
 - After all of the details are agreed to by candidate, the candidate has agreed to accept the strong call of the church, and the committee has resolved all of its questions and concerns, the committee announces to the church who the candidate is and when the candidate will be presented to the church.
- The committee makes arrangements for the candidate to meet as many segments of the church as possible prior to the church decision.
- Church and Candidate advised of when the vote is to be held.
- Results of vote are announced to the church; if the vote meets the church requirements, the candidate is informed and offered the call.
- Candidate's response: _____
- New minister arrives on field / first Sunday of new ministry
- Installation Service
- Six Month Evaluation

7. Things Pragmatic and Ethical

Don't let it be known in your current situation that you are in the process of moving. This can be very disruptive to the ministry of the church. Take a kingdom view rather than an employing church view. Moving from one ministry to another is part of your kingdom service.

Don't accept a candidating weekend or trial sermon unless you clearly understand and are completely satisfied with all of the conditions of the call. Don't accept candidating weekend or trial sermon unless you are fully prepared to say yes if the call is a strong vote in your favor.

It is proper to talk and interview with several churches at any one time. It is proper to communicate that you are in conversation with other churches. However, once you have accepted a trial sermon or candidating weekend, it is necessary to cease advancing discussions with all other churches.

Do be patient, wait on the Lord.

Do communicate with other professional staff members in the church you are currently serving. If relationships are strained, talk with your ABCD staff person about the viability of this communication.

Do tell ABC/Dakotas staff, and the other churches you have been talking with, when you have accepted a call.

Do communicate to the church you are leaving, that you will not be available to do funerals or weddings without the invitation of your successor.

8. Interview Materials

The following information is provided to search committees as a guide for their interviewing a candidate. This should assist you to prepare for the interviews.

PURPOSE:

The interview process is a time to examine values, attitudes, temperaments, hopes and dreams for the future, faith journeys and theological concepts. These and other discussion points will help all parties to see if compatibility exists. The interview is the time to get acquainted with each other and to engage in mutual sharing of facts concerning the candidate and the church.

PREPARATION:

Much of the effectiveness of the interview will depend on the committee's preparation for it. Therefore, the following suggestions are made:

1. The church should be responsible for all expenses related to hosting the candidate and spouse for the interview, including IRS mileage allowance or transportation, housing, meals, etc. These expenses should be paid to the candidate before leaving the interview.
2. A confirmation letter should be sent to the candidate. This should give all the details such as time of the interview, expense arrangements, the exact place of the meeting, and directions. Even if there has been a telephone conversation, it is important that these details be sent in written form.
3. Sufficient time should be allowed for the conference, preferably a full evening or its equivalent.
4. Consideration should be given as to whether the spouse should be involved in this first interview. It is the candidate's decision which is being sought, but the spouse's reactions will be a part of the decision. If the spouse is invited, then the interview process should include time for the spouse to participate.
5. The candidate and spouse should be given an opportunity to be fresh for the interview. A schedule which wears them out ahead of the interview should not be planned. It is wise to have them see the church, parsonage, community, schools, shopping areas, etc., but time should be allowed to freshen up and possibly rest a bit prior to the interview.
6. An informal agenda should be planned for the interview. It is the committee's interview and the committee should plan it, but not dominate it. The candidate should be given time to explore questions and concerns. The committee should know the areas of concern it wants to explore. Questions should be related to the *Professional Specialties** that were determined to be the most important by the congregation. The committee should determine in advance who will ask certain questions in order that all the entire committee participates in the interview.
7. Plan to hold the interview at a place where interruptions will be eliminated, and where the setting promotes a relaxed friendliness. This could be at the church, in a home or in a private room at a restaurant.

Suggestions for Interview:

Attempt to keep the interviews as similar as possible and this will provide a better basis for comparison.

Suggested components:

- Ask candidate to describe his/her salvation experience.
- Ask candidate to describe his/her call to ministry.
- Ask candidate to describe his/her understanding of local church ministry.
- Ask candidate to describe his/her gifts for ministry.
- Ask candidate what they are looking for in a church to serve.
- Ask candidate: What do you need to know about us?
- Ask candidate some form of the following questions which address the eight priorities you have identified for ministry (because the search and call process revolves around the ABPS specialties, we urge committees to ask questions related to the professional specialties they are seeking.)

The following are merely suggestions:

BUDGET/FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- How have you been involved in preparing and managing a budget?

CHURCH GROWTH

- What things have you done to help the church grow?
- Tell us about one program which you implemented that resulted in growth. How did you work within the church structure in order to make it happen?

COMMUNICATION

- Share some of the ways in which you have improved communication in your church, between groups.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT/INVOLVEMENT

- How have you helped the church to evaluate the needs of the community and to become involved in that process?

COUNSELING

- What percentage of time do you normally spend in counseling in a typical week?
- In what areas are you most comfortable in your counseling?

CROSS CULTURAL INVOLVEMENT/MISSION

- What are some other cultural groups with which you have worked?

EDUCATION

- Share with us a teaching idea that you have designed and implemented in your present ministry.
- How would you go about developing a program if you were to identify a concern? Give examples.
- What process would you use in determining resources for a congregation?

EVANGELISM

- What kind of programs/emphases have you used to help persons make decisions for Christ?
- How have persons been assimilated into the life and ministry of your church setting?

FACILITY MANAGEMENT

- How have you worked with a congregation to evaluate the use of space and equipment?
- What kind of systematic plan would you suggest for repair and maintenance of the church building?

FUNDRAISING

- Tell us about a particular fundraising event you led.

INTERCHURCH COOPERATION

- What are some of the things you have done in interchurch cooperation?
- How have you worked with other churches in your community?

INTERPRETING THE FAITH

- How have you helped your congregation to find an understanding of the Bible and faith which made sense to their lives?

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- How have you gone about identifying, selecting and supporting leaders?

LEADERSHIP ENVISIONING

- Tell us about one program which you saw a need to develop. How did you go about determining the leadership needs for the program?

MINISTRY OF THE LAITY DEVELOPMENT

- How have you identified gifts of laity and helped them to grow in those areas?

MISSION PROMOTION

- How have you promoted ABC missions?
- Tell us some of the things you have done to make the congregation aware of missions.

MUSIC DIRECTING/PERFORMING

- What kind of music ministry would you like to develop?

NURTURING FELLOWSHIP

- How would you go about strengthening the fellowship of the church?

ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

- Tell us the kind of planning model you use for yourself and for the church.

PASTORAL CARE

- How do you express your interest and concern for your people?
- Where do you find it difficult to express care?

PERSONNEL SUPERVISION

- Tell us about your supervision style. Have you supervised other persons?

PREACHING

- How do you go about developing a sermon?
- How would you describe your preaching style?

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- What are some of the programs which you have developed?
- What were needs you were trying to address?

RESEARCH

- How have you gone about securing reliable information which would help you make a good decision?

SOCIAL ACTION ENABLEMENT

- For which areas of social action have you been concerned as a minister?
- How have you communicated those concerns with your people?

SPIRITUAL LIFE DEVELOPMENT

- How do you care for your own spiritual development?
- How have you helped others to be intentional in their spiritual lives?

STEWARDSHIP

- How have you brought a stewardship emphasis to your congregation?
- How has that made a difference financially?

TEACHING

- How would you describe your teaching style?
- Share with us some of your teaching experiences.

VISITATION

- How do you organize yourself and the congregation to do visitation?
- What kind of training have you provided for lay visitors?

WORSHIP PREPARATION AND LEADING

- What excites you about worship?
- In what ways have you equipped persons to plan for or to lead in worship?

It is suggested that each person on the committee ask a question in order for the committee to observe how candidate deals with different folks.

9. Resignation

When to Resign:

Not until you have a place to go or you have to.

It is more likely than we want to admit that during your ministry you will be asked to resign (this request may or may not come to fruition).

You might be asked by an individual.

You might be asked by a group.

You might be asked by a board.

You might even be asked by church decision.

These can be the realities of ministry.

Don't react with the feeling, "I can't serve if someone wants me to leave." It can be said: "each of us could get a motion and a second, either way at any business meeting."

If it is the case that leaving your current ministry or seeking other placement is in your best interest or the best interest of the congregation you serve, please remember that placement requires time. Most of the time you, your family and the church will be better off if the transition can be "decent and orderly."

When discussion begins, when the request is made, contact region staff. The goal of this involvement will be discovery of issues, extent of the support for the minister's leaving and, in the event of your leaving, structuring of a time frame. At the very least, involvement of this third party will buy some time. Remember, even the church most often can't decide instantly the employment destiny of the minister. Conserve all the time you can to be used in the placement process.

Think before you respond. At least tell them you will get back to them with your response. This will give you time to seek counsel from peers and contact your area minister. All too often we act unilaterally, trying to avoid conflict or trying to solve the church's problem. It is better for all parties to shoulder their responsibilities and for the transition to be orderly.

How to Resign:

Resign at the time required by your work agreement. When a resignation is given, forward progress in the ministry with you as leader ceases. When you are exiting and calling, the next person becomes the focus.

Don't tell any laypersons in the congregation until you are ready for it to be public. When the time has come, begin telling key leaders and then close friends during the week preceding your public resignation. The purpose of telling anyone is to honor close friendships and to avoid an unnecessary shock to the congregation. Once you tell anyone, the word begins to get out.

The purpose of a resignation is:

- a) to notify a congregation of the upcoming end of your ministry among them;
- b) to fulfill the conditions of your work agreement (written or unwritten).

What to Say:

Suggested Forms:

FORM 1

It has been my privilege to serve my Lord and this congregation for the past ____ years. I would like to publicly inform the congregation that I have accepted a position as _____ at _____ and that my last day of ministry here will be _____. May God continue to guide and bless us both. Thank you.

- * If this is a resignation which is blessed by the congregation and the minister, please refer to form 1.
- * If this is a deliverance, refer to form 1.
- * If this is a chance to start over having learned from your mistakes, refer to form 1.
- * If it is painful and hard to leave a congregation you love and loves you, refer to form 1.
- * If this is one of your last chances to fire a volley of your anguish and pain, refer to form 1.
- * If this is an opportunity to explain to congregation what is wrong with them, refer to form 1.
- * If this is an exercise intended to help heal your hurts, refer to form 1.

FORM 1A

It has been my privilege to serve my Lord and this congregation for the past ____ years. I would like to publicly inform the congregation that my last day of ministry here will be _____. May God continue to guide and bless us both. Thank you.

- * If this is an involuntary termination, refer to form 1a.
- * If you are resigning but do not have future employment arranged, refer to form 1a.

The purpose of a resignation is to notify a congregation of the end of your ministry. To address all other issues, talk to the board or individuals designated by the church. The members of the congregation who haven't "heard you" before, and in all probability won't "hear you" now, should not be the focus. If you indulge yourself, in all likelihood, good folks and the ministry of the church will be hurt.

Instructed by Matthew 5:37

LET YOUR RESIGNATION BE A RESIGNATION.