

BEGINNING A PASTORAL MINISTRY



**A Document of
The General Commission
on Ministry**

distributed by
Office of Search and Call
Disciples Home Missions
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Beginning a Pastoral Ministry

Greetings to you ministers and congregations as you prepare to begin your ministry together!

The beginning of a new ministry represents a prime opportunity for renewal, for both the minister and congregation. During the Search and Call process, energy and excitement emerge out of the interaction between the clergy person and congregation. Ministers accepting a new call as well as congregations calling a new minister experience a renewed sense of mission. Both the calling congregation and new minister together bring hope and vision to the whole church as well as for its individual members.

Most church members acknowledge that moving is fraught with difficulties and challenges, especially when moving to another community. When a minister accepts a new call, he/she leaves friends, sometimes family and familiar surroundings. Families come in a variety of forms and this is not only true for church members but for ministers as well. Whether the minister is single or married, has school-aged children or cares for an elderly relative, clergy family members appreciate attention given to their needs and concerns as they become acclimated to the new community. In summary, needs of new pastors vary. When the church helps the clergy family become comfortable in the community and congregation as soon as possible it makes the transition easier and the congregation's ministry is more likely to continue uninterrupted.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide information to both the minister and congregation that will help make for a smooth transition. For ministers, this booklet contains some practical suggestions that may not have been addressed previously. For congregations, the booklet contains tips on ways to help the minister and family become familiar with the church and community. This booklet is provided to help both minister and congregation take advantage of this fresh opportunity for renewal and growth.

Booklet Contents:

- Time Table for Arrival of New Minister
- Arrival Checklist
- Talking Points
- Getting Started
- Covenant for a New Ministry
- Letter of Call
- Installation Service
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Time Table for Arrival of New Minister

Two months prior to arrival

Former Minister	Congregation	Regional Minister/Staff	Interim/ Transitional Minister	New Minister
Seeks to enable the success of the former minister's successor			Focuses on interim ministry issues; continues to prepare congregation for new leadership	
	Issues Letter of Call			Accepts Call by signing Letter of Call
	Notifies other candidates by letter that a call has been issued			
	Notifies Regional Church Office and Pension Fund that a minister has been called			
	Plans Exit Interview with Interim/Transitional Minister		Plans to attend Exit Interview	
	Assists with realtor contacts, if necessary			Confirms housing arrangements
	Sends information on schools & community to new minister; assists spouse/partner with possible job contacts			
Continues to abide by Ministerial Code of Ethics	Communicates with Regional Office to schedule a date for new minister's installation	Communicates w/ congregation to schedule a date & provide resources for new minister's installation		Communicates with congregation and Regional Office regarding installation
	May prepare for new minister's arrival with prayer vigil			

One month prior to arrival

Former Minister	Congregation	Regional Minister/Staff	Interim/ Transitional Minister	New Minister
	Holds Exit Interview with Interim/Transitional Minister		Attends Exit Interview	
	Plans welcome for new minister (and family, when appropriate)			
				Makes arrangements for moving
	If there is a parsonage, arranges for cleaning and repairs.			
		Sends welcome letter and Regional information, if minister is coming from another Region		
	Collects items on Arrival Check List			Reviews progress of Check List
				Checks on special legal requirements in the new state/province (e.g. weddings)
	Plans leave taking service for Interim/Transitional Minister (see Closing a Pastoral Ministry)			
Facilitates success of successor		Requests copy of record from previous Region (i.e. involvement in Regional events, boards, committees, Camp & Conference, etc.)		

Two weeks prior to arrival

Former Minister	Congregation	Regional Minister/Staff	Interim/Transitional Minister	New Minister
	Holds farewell service for Interim/Transitional Minister		Attends farewell service	
			Seeks to enable success of successor	
	Completes maintenance of parsonage			

Arrival of New Minister

Former Minister	Congregation	Regional Minister/Staff	Interim/Transitional Minister	New Minister
Continues to abide by Ministerial Code of Ethics	Welcomes new minister (and family, as appropriate)			
	Works with new minister to plan installation service			Helps plan installation service
	Submits information on new minister to local media			
				Arranges date to visit Regional Church Office
	Presents new minister with check lists, community resources, etc.			
	Elders accompany new minister on initial visits to hospitals, nursing homes, home-centered and introduces to community leaders			Establishes and makes known personal patterns of spiritual discipline and self care
				Determines day to transfer membership to new congregation
	Installs new minister	Participates in Installation service		Participates in Installation Service
	Works with new minister to establish Pastoral Relations Committee	Schedules training and trains PRC		Works with congregation to establish PRC
		Follows up with Search Committee		

ARRIVAL CHECKLIST

For pastors arriving at a church

This is a list of items that will be helpful to the congregation and incoming minister. There may be some items that do not apply or items not on this list that would be appropriate in your setting.

If the preceding installed minister or Interim/Transitional minister did not leave an **Exit Checklist**, the Search Committee or Elders should collect the following items.

- A complete and up-to-date membership list of total and participating membership. This database should include records of membership, attendance, baptisms, marriages, births, funerals and transfers in and out. It should also include names of children as well as family connections.
- Map of the area and directions to every member's home
- Current mailing lists, clearly identified as to their content and usage
- A list of any other pastors that relate to, or are part of, the congregation
- A list of military personnel from the congregation
- A list of college students from the congregation
- A list of home-centered persons for whom the congregation is responsible
- A list of prospective members with some notation as to their interest
- A list of the current officers and members of the committees of the congregation and a list of officers from recent years
- A list of the church school teachers, active and inactive
- A roster of the congregation's children and youth—listed by age or church school class
- A list of church-related organizations and officers
- Notes on affiliations of the congregation with community, state and national organizations
- A schedule of regular and special meetings of the congregation
- A full year church calendar of regular events
- Notes on special Sundays and important traditions observed in the congregation
- Sample worship bulletins, notes on how regular worship services are typically planned, as well as how and when the bulletin is prepared
- A list of upcoming programs and projects, special and ongoing, in effect or planned. These should have notations about contact persons and location of pertinent information.

- A list of situations that need follow-up, such as:
 - Counseling Anticipated or planned baptisms
 - Reception of new members Scheduled weddings
 - Pastoral care issues Crises
 - People needing continued help (*food, clothing, housing, etc.*)
- The congregation's constitution and by-laws, governing policies and personnel policies
- Names of staff or personnel, their job descriptions, information on who has oversight of staff and location of past performance evaluations
- A current financial report and budget
- A list of community agencies to which referrals may be made
- Information on location of hospitals, special parking and identification requirements
- List of local funeral homes with which the church has worked closely and names of funeral directors
- Contact information for the congregation's legal representation
- Name of insurance agent and contact information
- Information on who to contact in the event that the church building needs a plumbing, electrical, or furnace repair, etc.
- Information on local clergy associations and ecumenical groups
- List of other faith communities in the area, with names and phone numbers of leaders
- A list of both short-range and long-range goals, which the church has accepted, and their status
- Members of the prayer chain or other prayer groups
- Sample letters currently being sent to Sunday morning visitors, new members, etc.
- Copies of several recent newsletters
- Notes on the process for production of all regular church communications
- Up-to-date files for various services and vendors (e.g., legal, property, auditing, supplies)
- A complete set of church keys, clearly marked or with a list identifying each key and its function
- Information on the community social services structure, food banks, food pantries, police department, child protective services, etc.
- Information about the church's website, name and contact information for the web master
- Information on other items that the pastor will need to know in order to make a smooth transition

Helping the Relocation Process

For congregations preparing for a new pastor's arrival

There are several ways in which the congregation can help the new minister feel at home in her/his new community. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list. Once they begin thinking about it, church members will be able to suggest many short cuts to becoming acclimated to the new church and community.

Housing

- If there is a parsonage, have it inspected. Then, in consultation with the minister's family, renovate it, upgrading plumbing, electrical, heating and air conditioning systems if needed; paint walls and replace carpet, etc.
- If there is no parsonage, put the minister in contact with reliable realtor to locate affordable housing options

Family needs

- Help identify employment opportunities for the minister's spouse
- Gather information on schools for the children
- Provide map of the local area, identifying civic buildings, schools, grocery stores, etc.
- Request information on and directions to local recreational and sports facilities
- Obtain list of medical providers covered by health insurance the congregation provides
- Resources for pet care

Children and Youth

- Gather information on reputable day care and after school services
- Provide notes on special state laws and services regarding minors
- Information on children's organization and activities (i.e., scouts, 4-H, non-school related sports)

Adult services

- Provide notes on laws and mandates regarding older adults
- Obtain a list of county based services for older adults
- Provide list of resources for adult day care available in the area
- Provide contact information for the Area Agency on Aging

Service and Social organizations

The new minister (and family members) may be strangers to the community. If so, he/she may appreciate receiving a list of service and social organizations active in the community. Such organizations can help the new minister (and family) to become active citizens in the community.

Quality of Life

- Museums and theatres
- Parks and recreation (information on walking paths, bike trails, sports teams, golf courses, etc.)
- Art Centers
- Music organizations (i.e., community choirs, band, philharmonic orchestra)

Talking Points

The following issues are normally resolved in discussions between the Search and Call committee and the ministerial candidate when the minister visits prior to the call. However, if these issues were not resolved, it is important to clarify them within the first few weeks of the new minister's arrival.

1. ***A job description:***

that is clearly stated not only in the Letter of Call but also in the policies and procedures of the congregation and of the congregation's board minutes. Items that go beyond a generic job description need to be clearly referenced in official church documents that can be referenced by congregational leadership. For example, a congregation planning a building project would state expectations perhaps as "upon the minister's second year we anticipate that he/she will lead us in a \$300,000 capital campaign."

2. ***Congregational lines of authority:***

Who does the minister call when there are parsonage issues, such as plumbing, pests, etc. Who fills/drains the baptistery? With whom does the minister schedule vacation and other leave time?

3. ***Stewardship of time off:***

The congregation's understanding and respect for the minister's day(s) off will likely increase if members understand

- a. Who to call (an elder, deacon or church secretary) for issues of pastoral care that are not emergencies
- b. That the minister is available for emergencies and funerals but not for quickly called meetings that could be held on another date.
- c. The minister's own stewardship of day(s) off by not scheduling meetings.

4. ***Clarify vacation time, study leave and sabbatical policy:***

If the congregational profile lists *less* vacation time than the minister has had previously, does not offer study leave or does not offer some sense of being willing to discuss a sabbatical policy, use that information as a reference point to begin a discussion. This may be an area in which Regional Church Staff can provide clarity for the minister and direction for the congregation.

Getting Started

Where Do I Begin?

Pray

The minister is the congregation's chief *spiritual leader*. There are other aspects of leading a congregation but the most important is as its spiritual leader.

*The ironic truth is that our congregations don't **really** want us to be CEO's. . . What they **really** want is a **pastor**—someone who seeks to draw close to God through the study of scripture, theological reflection, and prayer, and who then seeks to share through preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and governance what he or she has discovered. (Jim Kitchens, The Postmodern Parish, page 98)*

Preach

Prior to arriving, the minister

- Prepares the first sermon to be delivered at the new church

During the first week, the minister

- Prepares the second sermon

Participate in the life of the community

In the first week, the minister

- Visits the hospital(s), introduces him/herself to the chaplain's office, obtains parking pass and hospital ID

Within the first month, the minister

- Contacts other clergy in the area to introduce him/herself and learn about 1) any community worship services (i.e., Thanksgiving, Lent, Good Friday); 2) dealing with transients; 3) recommendations for counselors, social service agencies, etc.
- Introduces him/herself to local funeral directors
- Visits schools to become known to the superintendent and principals and to learn how schools interact with the community
- Attends Ministerial Association meetings

Provide Pastoral Care

In the first week, the minister

- Makes hospital calls
- Begins follow up on recent visitors

Within the first month, the minister

- Visits home-centered members accompanied by church elders, who will introduce the new minister

Probe the history of the congregation

Within the first month, the minister

- Sets up “getting to know you” meetings. As part of the getting to know each other process, engage small groups of church members, as well as non-member regular worship attendees, in discussion about their relationship to the congregation. One way to elicit thoughts is to ask small group members to--
 - 1) Describe their first memories of the congregation or what drew them to the congregation. What is it that keeps them involved in the congregation’s life?
 - 2) State what they believe is the most exciting thing happening in the congregation right now (other than the new minister).
 - 3) If there were no limitations, describe what they would like the congregation to do and be.

Discussion based on these questions can assist the minister in learning about the congregation’s past and present situation and can help clarify for both minister and church members the congregation’s values, vision and mission.

- Meets with church committee chairs to learn about their talents, programs, goals, etc.

Put in order your administrative life

In the first week, the minister

- Meets with church staff to begin building relationships
- With church staff, works out schedule for producing various church communications (i.e., Sunday bulletin, newsletter, website updates, etc.)
- Sets up his/her office. Communicates regular office hours, devotion time, etc.
- Learns lines of authority such as, who is to be notified when there are maintenance issues; how are reimbursements handled; with whom the minister schedules vacation time.

Protect your time

In the first week, the minister

- Establishes stewardship of time by scheduling and *taking* day(s) off
- Communicates via newsletter and/or website 1) what the regular day(s) off will be; 2) who to contact for issues of pastoral care that are not emergencies; 3) that the minister will not be available on the day off for quickly called meetings that could be held on another date; and 4) that the minister will respect his/her own day(s) off by not scheduling meetings unless necessary
- Schedules time with family
- Establishes pattern of self-care immediately (does not put this off until after he/she is “settled”)

Pray

With the first week, the minister

- Establishes daily prayer and meditation time and communicates this with the congregation

Establishing Healthy Habits

*And Jesus increased in wisdom, and in stature and in favor with God and man.
Luke 2:52*

*We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. . .
Ephesians 4:15b*

The beginning of a pastorate is the best time to establish healthy habits, both for the minister and congregation. Healthy, vital congregations need healthy, vital ministers. In order to be healthy and whole, one must give attention to all aspects of life. Here are a few suggestions:

Physical health

1. Eat a healthy diet
2. Get regular exercise, for example--
 - ❑ Join a health club. Some give discounts for ministers when the congregation buys the membership on behalf of the minister
 - ❑ Bicycle. Joining a bicycle club increases the probability of cycling regularly.
 - ❑ Walk (*When church members drop by the office, one Disciples minister invites them to accompany him on his walk. This is one way to include exercise in the daily schedule*).
3. Rest
 - ❑ Get 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night
4. Take your days off
 - ❑ If an important event (i.e. funeral) makes it impossible to take a regularly scheduled day(s), re-schedule the day(s) off
5. Make contact with new health care professionals (primary care Physician, dentist) within the first month.

Relational

1. Love the significant others in your life. Give them your time and attention. How can we serve God and the church if we allow our primary relationships to die of neglect?
2. Make new friends. Clergy of other faith communities are not laboring in the same vineyard and can become great friends and “sounding boards.”
3. Stay in contact with old friends.
4. The congregation’s former minister can be a wonderful colleague and friend.

Intellectual

1. Establish a pattern of regular reading. Try to read a book a week. (It’s okay to read a novel.)
2. Join or form a clergy book discussion club.
3. Keep yourself challenged: Take classes, learn a new skill, try something new.

Social / Emotional

1. Develop friendships *outside* of the congregation.
2. Develop or maintain a hobby.

Spiritual

1. Practice the spiritual disciplines of prayer/meditation, Bible study and stewardship.
2. Ask a trusted colleague to be your prayer partner.
3. Engage a spiritual director to guide your spiritual journey.
4. Arrange for periodic spiritual retreats (i.e., one day a month, one week a year).
5. Develop lay leaders and empower them.

A Closing Word

To the new minister:

Congregations need time to build trust with a new minister and to perceive that person as their pastor. Do your part in getting to know the church members and building relationships with them. Show them that you *care* about them. Be present and listen. Above all, be patient.

Weddings, funerals, visits and communication at times of crisis, illness or joy are powerful opportunities for forging and nurturing the pastoral trust relationship.

Former ministers can become great colleagues and sources of support. In all situations, the previous minister(s) and the new minister should refer to the Ministerial Code of Ethics to guide their relationships for the best interest of the congregation.

To the congregation:

Relationships grow through time and trust. Be patient with the new minister as he/she gets to know the congregation and its members. Do your part in getting to know the new minister and his/her family members. Allowing the pastor get to know you will not only help the minister remember your name, it will help him/her minister more effectively to you and your family.

Share your ideas about the congregation's ministry. Don't hold your vision too close to your heart.

Times of high emotion, such as weddings and funerals, are powerful opportunities to form a strong relationship with the minister. Resist the temptation to fall back on the former pastor in times of crisis. Be aware that the Ministerial Code of Ethics prohibits former ministers from continuing to perform ministerial functions in the life of the congregation. Trust that God is working through the new minister and call upon him/her when in need of pastoral care.

The whole congregation as well as individual members should refer to the Ethical Guidelines for Congregational Conduct to guide their relationships with one another, the minister, the community, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Sample Liturgy of Installation
Celebrating the Covenant between Pastor and Congregation
(For Bulletin)

The Presentation Search Committee Chair

The Introduction Regional Minister

The Affirmations

The Minister

The Elders

The Diaconate

The Church Board

The Covenant of the Congregation

Leader: We wait for your Spirit, O God.

People: Like Abraham and Sarah before us, we have accepted your call to journey into unknown territory. We wait for your Spirit now to show us the way.

Leader: Like Moses and Miriam before us, we have accepted your call to lead your children toward freedom. We wait for your Spirit now to show us the way.

People: Like Ruth and Jeremiah before us, we have accepted your call to risk.

Leader: Like Mary Magdalene and John the Baptist before us, we have accepted your call to bear witness to the God of life. We wait for your Spirit to lead us in word and action.

People: Like Paul and Priscilla before us, we have accepted your call to establish your church in the place. We wait for your Spirit to enable our ministry.

Leader: Guiding, empowering Spirit: we wait upon your silent breath that gives life to our faith, that makes active our love, that emboldens our commitment, and that gives direction to our work.

People: We wait with longing, Spirit of God, come quickly to be in us. AMEN.

The Covenant of the Minister

The Prayer of Consecration (unison)

O most virtuous Spirit, may we be enjoined together this day in living out a shared ministry which emulates the life and witness of Christ. May we covenant in holy bond to love each other, to agree to disagree, to restrain from speaking unkindly of others and to avoid all forms of unfaithfulness.

Bless our covenant as we minister together and seek to nurture harmony as pastor and congregation. May we witness your gifts in one another. May we grow together in joy and wisdom as we venture forth praising your Spirit. Amen.

The Declaration

Script for Liturgy of Installation

The Presentation

Search Committee Chair

As chair of the Search Committee of _____ (name of church), I am pleased to present _____ for installation as our pastor. I invite our Regional Minister to lead us in the covenant that will bind us to one another.

The Introduction

Regional Minister

In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Sovereign of the Church and in the presence of God, we now enter into the covenant of Installation between _____ (minister) and _____ (church).

To seal and bless the joining together of this one whom God has called to be shepherd in the Church, and this congregation whom God has called to be God's loving and faithful family, is a moment of sacred presence.

The vows which I, as the regional pastor of ministers and churches in _____ (region), shall call each of you to undertake in the presence of God, shall bind you into a covenant for life and ministry in this place.

The Affirmation of the Minister

Regional Minister: _____, will you please stand.

Do you acknowledge your baptismal vow that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God?

Minister: I do.

Regional Minister: Do you reaffirm your ordination vow through which you, of your own free will, took upon yourself the obligation, responsibilities, and disciplines of the office of an ordained minister of Jesus Christ and through which you promised to serve the Church in the name of God by loving its members, caring for them, nurturing them, sustaining them, and equipping them for the service of God?

Minister: I do.

The Affirmation of the Elders

Regional Minister: Will the Elders please stand. Do you acknowledge the holy responsibilities of the office of Elder for which you have been chosen, to love and sustain this congregation whose spiritual welfare you have in your care?

Elders: I do.

Regional Minister: Do you solemnly covenant together with this pastor to work in love and harmony, as Christ has commanded, to oversee and encourage the spiritual growth of the congregation so that you may be the Church as God intended?
Elders: I do.

The Affirmation of the Diaconate

Regional Minister: Will the Diaconate (Deacons/Deaconesses) please stand. So you acknowledge the holy responsibilities of the office of Deacon for which you have been chosen, to serve this congregation whose material affairs you have in your care?

Diaconate: I do.

Regional Minister: Do you solemnly covenant together with this pastor to work in common service for the good of the congregation so that the church might grow in ministry and witness?

Diaconate: I do.

The Affirmation of the Church Board / Council

Regional Minister: Will the members of the church board please stand? Do you acknowledge the particular responsibilities of your office in this church and do you reaffirm your love and devotion to this congregation whose life you serve?

Church Board: I do.

Regional Minister: Do you now solemnly covenant with this pastor to work with her/him in love and harmony as Christ has commanded, faithfully performing those duties assigned to you so that this congregation may grow in obedience to our Lord?

Church Board: I do.

The Covenant of the Congregation

Regional Minister: Will the congregation please stand. Do you individually acknowledge your baptismal vow that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God and your obligation to serve Christ as your Sovereign and Saviour? Do you solemnly covenant together with this pastor to work with her/him in love and harmony as commanded by our Lord to fulfill the mission that Christ has laid upon us in this congregation, in this community and throughout the world? Will you faithfully accomplish with this pastor those ministries that may be asked of you according to your gifts and graces?

Congregation: I do.

Regional Minister: Will you share with me the Litany of God's Call?

Leader: We wait for your Spirit, O God.

People: Like Abraham and Sarah before us, we have accepted your call to journey into unknown territory. We wait for your Spirit now to show us the way.

Leader: Like Moses and Miriam before us, we have accepted your call to lead your children toward freedom. We wait for your Spirit now to show us the way.

People: Like Ruth and Jeremiah before us, we have accepted your call to risk.

Leader: Like Mary Magdalene and John the Baptist before us, we have accepted your call to bear witness to the God of life. We wait for your Spirit to lead us in word and action.

People: Like Paul and Priscilla before us, we have accepted your call to establish your church in the place. We wait for your Spirit to enable our ministry.

Leader: Guiding, empowering Spirit: we wait upon your silent breath that gives life to our faith, that makes active our love, that emboldens our commitment, and that gives direction to our work.

People: We wait with longing, Spirit of God, come quickly to be in us. AMEN.

The Covenant of the Minister

Regional Minister: _____, will you please stand. Do you now declare that it is your desire to serve _____ as its pastor in love and faithfulness to God?

Minister: I do.

Regional Minister: Do you, therefore, covenant together with this people of God to be a good shepherd by loving them, teaching them, nurturing them, sustaining them and equipping them so that by God's strength and grace you and this congregation may faithfully accomplish God's mission for the salvation of all persons to the glory of God and not our own?

Minister: I do.

The Prayer of Consecration

Regional Minister: Pastor and congregation, will you join together in the Prayer of Consecration?

O most virtuous Spirit, may we be enjoined together this day in living out a shared ministry which emulates the life and witness of Christ. May we covenant in holy bond to love each other, to agree to disagree, to restrain from speaking unkindly of others and to avoid all forms of unfaithfulness.

Bless our covenant as we minister together and seek to nurture harmony as pastor and congregation. May we witness your gifts in one another. May we grow together in joy and wisdom as we venture forth praising your Spirit. Amen.

The Declaration

Regional Minister: Because of the covenantal vows now made and blest, I as Regional Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in _____, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Sovereign of the Church, do hereby declare you, _____, to be the pastor of the _____.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen. (Numbers 6:24-26)

[Litany of Installation provided by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma]

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