



YOUR CHURCH'S UNIQUE INTERIM NEEDS

THE CHURCH WITH PASTORAL TRUST ISSUES

If You “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” with two of the following statements, your church’s primary struggle may be related to pastoral trust:

- Our pastor was asked to leave.
- Our church was surprised by our pastor’s resignation.
- There are unresolved issues that need to be addressed before our next pastor arrives.

Whether or not your pastor was beloved, his leaving undoubtedly created grief and anxiety. Some of your congregants may feel disoriented, perplexed, lost, remorseful or sad, while others are happy the pastor is gone. Not everyone will have the same perspective and feelings. This can create a sense of division in your church.

Some members may think their problems walked out the door with the departing pastor, while others ask, “Why did he leave? Didn’t he love us? Why did God take him away from us? Will we ever find someone as good as our retiring pastor? Who is going to fill in until we get a new pastor? Is this the time for our family to look for another church?”

Still others may feel guilt: “Were we too hard on the pastor? Have we become repeat offenders who chew up pastors and spit them out? Does his leaving suggest we have issues to address?”

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How a congregation answers these questions reveals a lot about its spiritual and organizational health. How would your church answer these questions? What does it say about the health of your church?

A poorly handled transition carries a high cost. It can lead to membership loss, a decline in attendance, low morale, and a decrease in giving, enthusiasm, effective evangelism, and pastoral care.

Here are some articles to help you navigate the transition your church might be facing:

- 5 Common Mistakes Churches Make during Pastoral Transition
- The First 5 Steps for a Church Facing Transition

THE CHURCH IN CONFLICT

If You “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” with two of the following statements, your church’s primary struggle may be related to church conflict:

- We have several long-tenured families that control the decision-making of the church.
- There are unresolved issues that need to be addressed before the next pastor arrives.
- I sense that there’s a lot of backstabbing and gossiping in our congregation.

Of the hundreds of churches Interim Pastor Ministries has helped, we have never found one without at least a few internal issues. During the transition, your Leadership Team and church must surface and begin to work on these issues.

Perhaps too many of the decisions made are politically based, rather than spiritually directed. Perhaps the conflict is rooted in financial issues. Maybe there is a power imbalance in the congregation and/or among staff. Perhaps a group of families has left, and your attendance is in decline.

Your leadership team may resist a transparent evaluation for fear of surfacing problems they cannot handle or control. They may be tempted to leave these issues for the new pastor. If not dealt with, however, they will continue to foster discontent and can lead to a rough tenure for the next pastor.

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Here are some articles to help you get started dealing with your church's internal issues:

- 5 Common Mistakes Churches Make during Pastoral Transition
- The First 5 Steps for a Church Facing Transition

READY FOR WHAT'S NEXT

If You "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" with two of the following statements, on the surface your church may have no presenting issues:

- Our church leadership is unified about the direction of the church.
- We have a strong and healthy sense of identity as a congregation.
- We are mostly clear on the kind of pastor that we need next.

This is a wonderful place to be in a congregation. It allows the church to focus its energy on preparing for the next pastor. While your church may think it is healthy, even healthy churches are always under construction. Every church must push toward the mark of God's high calling (Phil. 3:13-14).

With the right interim leadership, churches can always improve their health during the transition between pastors.

An interim pastor can help take churches to new heights as you look for the next permanent pastor. A new pastor wants to lead a church committed to God's Great Commission and Great Commandment.

Here are some articles to help your church continue to thrive through transition:

- 7 Ways a Seasoned, Skilled and Strategic Interim Pastor Can Help Your Church Thrive during Pastoral Transition
- The First 5 Steps for a Church Facing Transition

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