

## **New Appointment to Large Church: Where to Start**

### **A. Areas Critical to Large Churches and Newly Appointed Lead Pastors**

1. SPRC should plan public experiences of closure for the departing large church lead pastor and entry for the arriving large church lead pastor (see “Guidelines for Pastoral Transitions” for suggestions).
2. Newly appointed lead pastors should:
  - a. Give attention to self-care and spiritual renewal.
  - b. Develop peer support with lead pastors serving in similar-sized appointments. Accountable Reimbursement funds and MEF funds would be appropriate to use to cover expenses of a qualified coach or therapist. He or she could assist in dealing with issues of closure, grief, or other related matters.
  - c. Attend to multi-staff issues including their oversight.
  - d. Take advantage of large church training opportunities (for example, the fall UM First-Time Senior Pastor training offered by the General Church annually in Pittsburgh).
  - e. Conduct pre-arrival research and information gathering. Appropriate sources are District Superintendents, Conference Journals, and Congregational and Community Profiles accessible through the Conference website, and other community profiles/resources available through the Conference Congregational Development Office
  - f. Develop a preaching plan for initial sermons based on needs of the church and his/her vision for ministry.
  - g. Invest a significant amount of time listening, building relationships and trust. Careful listening enables the pastor to seek evidence to confirm or refute first impressions and discoveries related to pre-arrival research.
3. The role of the District Superintendent is critical in creating a smooth transition. The transition process includes:
  - a. In January, the district superintendent consults with the pastor/staff parish relations committee if a change in pastoral leadership may be occurring and reviews the results of the Appointment Review process. (See Cabinet Policy.) These results are shared in writing with the district superintendent.
  - b. The district superintendent articulates in writing the expectations of the Bishop/Cabinet and the local church for this appointment with the incoming pastor (based on Appointment Evaluation document and including future goals, mission and ministry priorities and needs, etc.).
  - c. “Meet your Pastor” meeting occurs between incoming Pastor and the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee.
  - d. The district superintendent facilitates a meeting between the incoming and outgoing pastors.
  - e. The district superintendent makes sure that there is a meeting with incoming pastor and staff.
  - f. The district superintendent makes sure that relevant documents such as church policies and procedure manuals are shared with the incoming pastor.

- g. The district superintendent stays in touch with incoming pastor to deal with issues related to housing, family, spouse needs, etc.
  - h. In churches with worship attendance over 400, it is recommended that the Bishop meets with the incoming pastor to go over expectations, the context, and culture of the upcoming appointment.
4. SPRC and transitioning pastors should consult with the district superintendent regarding creative spacing between departing and arriving large church lead pastors during the transition.

## **B. Areas Important to the Large Church Lead Pastors**

1. Find and use relevant resources
  - a. "Leaving Well and Preparing the Way," by Lovett Weems
  - b. "Guidelines for Pastoral Transitions," LDI, 2006
  - c. Bibliography of Resources by Lovett Weems, to be available on the Conference web site.
2. Transitioning large church lead pastors should consider seeking out peer support, therapy if needed, or contracting with a coach. The Conference web site and word of mouth are two suggested sources of referrals.
3. The large church lead pastor should make every attempt to be sensitive to the needs and emotions of her/his family. Suggested areas to be attentive to include establishing healthy boundaries, immediately establishing a healthy balance of professional and personal responsibilities, and immediately establishing a healthy lifestyle. More guidance for this is addressed in the "Guidelines for Pastoral Transitions" conference manual, LDI, 2006.

## **C. Meeting with District Superintendent**

Because of the fragile nature of large-church health and stability, the district superintendent should meet with the newly appointed large church pastor after the first six months of the new appointment. The meeting would include a review of the expectations of the Bishop and Cabinet, and a review of the progress being made towards meeting these expectations.