



Transition Summary and Vital Leader Profile

Zion - Redeemer Parish, Wittenberg, WI

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Transition Summary

There are a number of transitional tasks that must be accomplished as a church makes the journey from the leadership of one pastor to the leadership of its next pastor/rector. Every church is different in how they experience a pastoral transition. Therefore, the way these transitional tasks will be accomplished also varies. Information found in your *Vital Signs* report can provide guidance to leaders in developing a transition approach that is geared specifically to your church. The suggestions below are intended to serve as a starting point for developing a transition plan. As always, survey data is the beginning of a conversation not the end.

I. Identity and Direction

The priorities in the *Vital Signs* report are a step in the direction of the congregation establishing a vision independent of the previous pastor. In the transition period it can be important to prepare the congregation for what these priorities will require. In your particular church the following steps may be helpful:

- Introducing best practices in family ministry that encompass parents, youth, and children.
- Exploring best practices related to reaching people with the message of God's love in Christ.
- Offering different models for education and spiritual formation that are a good fit for the church.
- Exploring different aspects of healing and how the church might become engaged in these.
- Helping leaders and members explore different options for building relationships in congregations today.

II. Remedial Issues

In most churches there are issues, including conflict, that can be addressed in the transition period that will help the next pastor/rector get a stronger start. Your *Vital Signs* report suggests that the following issues should be considered for action in the transition:

- The quality of the worship experience
- How well the opportunities fit various lifestyles
- How well the church helps members discern their gifts
- The opportunities for members to engage in ministry

At least one of these factors may require some attention in the transition. Alternatively leaders might delay action for the arrival of the next pastor/rector.

In addition, the conflict level in your church is average compared with other churches. Nonetheless, it may be helpful to address any unresolved conflict during the transition and before the next pastor/rector arrives.

III. Administrative Issues

There are a range of administrative issues that typically need to be addressed in a transition but two of the most important regard the staffing of the church (especially if you are a multiple staff church) and church records.

- During the transition leaders should conduct an overall review of the personnel policy of the church to make sure that it is up-to-date and consistent with the most recent changes in the law.
- In multiple-staff churches, it is important to review the staffing rationale to make sure that it is appropriate to the vision and size of the church. If the conflict management or morale scores are low, the leadership should assess the alignment, performance, and size of the staff and make changes if necessary.
- Your membership roll is three times as large as your worship attendance. There may be names of persons on the roll who are no longer active and need to be removed during the transition.

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IV. Change

Your Vital Signs report indicates that your church is average in its openness to change. If reaching new persons or improving the morale of your church are important priorities, you may want to consider additional steps during the transition to help the church become more open to change. However, you should also consider the following:

- Members are more or less comfortable with the current direction of the church. The transition can provide a good opportunity to identify areas that should be maintained and areas where changes are needed.
- Members are more or less comfortable with the current set of skills and responsibilities for the pastor/rector. The transition can provide a good opportunity to identify areas that should be maintained and areas where changes are needed.

V. Opportunities and Vulnerabilities

- Members indicate that their level of involvement during the transition will be low compared to other churches. Since you may find it more difficult to recruit folks to key ministries, you may want to be cautious starting new ministries that draw from the same pool of involved members.
- Members indicate that their availability for transition tasks will be very low compared to other churches. You may need to give priority to key transition functions.
- Members indicate that their giving to the church in the transition tasks will be average compared to other churches. In order to sustain your current income level, you may need to make a good case for additional giving during the transition.
- Members indicate that their likelihood of visiting other churches during the transition is average. There may be a drop in worship attendance and involvement in other activities. You may want to monitor involvement to quickly respond to those who are not present.

VI. Dealing with Loss

Members experience feelings of loss at different levels during transitions depending upon the church. Your members have mixed feelings about the transition. Some are more uncomfortable than others. It will be important to minister to those who are struggling so that the whole church can move forward to embrace the next pastor/rector.

VII. Trust in the Leadership

Members indicate an average level of confidence that the leadership is representative of them. During the transition, leaders may want to increase the amount of communication to make the level of confidence even higher.

Vital Leader Profile

The information in the *Vital Signs* report enables the leaders of a church to specify the characteristics of a pastor, priest, or rector who will be a good fit for their particular church. The following list of requirements has been generated from your report and is intended to serve as a starting point for your discernment process. You will need to include other sources of information in your final document including the history of the church, community statistics, your own experience, and your sense of the leading of the Holy Spirit.

I. Professional Interests

A pastor/rector who is a good fit for your church should exhibit an interest in subjects that are important for leading a church like yours. This would include the following:

- Appreciative of a variety of theological perspectives but intellectually resonant with a moderate perspective
- Knowledgeable regarding the dynamics of pastoral-sized* churches and affirming of the distinctive opportunities for ministry that they offer
- Energized by the style of ministry that characterizes a community-focused rather than a regionally-focused church
- Attracted to books, articles, and resources that offer effective strategies and tactics for a church culture characterized by stability, traditions, and Biblical clarity

II. Context

A pastor/rector who is a good fit for your church should feel comfortable with the particular aspects of both the surrounding community and the congregation itself. This would include the following:

- A community based congregation where over 60% of the members live less than 5 miles away from the church building
- A church where the community within one mile of the church has a population that has been in slow decline over the last three years
- A church where the income in the neighborhood within one mile of the church has not changed over the last three years
- A theological perspective that tends to be moderate on the whole with a number of persons in the congregation with more conservative and more progressive views
- A culture that values stability, tradition, and time-tested truth
- A church that is struggling with lower energy and satisfaction, and requires a significant effort to recover a sense of purpose and well-being
- A Christian community where the rate of giving is low as a percentage of household income. Financially there is some room to grow which would make available additional resources for the ministry of the church.

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III. Abilities

A pastor/rector who is a good fit for your church has the abilities required to deal with critical issues the church is facing and to move the church forward toward important goals. Depending upon the leadership style, these abilities may be expressed as a personal capacity or through the development and management of other leaders.

- An ability and interest in creating a family life ministry that is effective in attracting parents, children, and youth
- An ability and interest in excellent preaching
- An ability and interest in reshaping the ministries of the church to reach others and incorporate them into the life of the church
- An ability and interest in creating worship experiences that deepen members' relationship with God and one another
- An ability and interest in developing a Christian education and formation ministry that reaches people at every age and stage of life
- An ability and interest in creating ministries in the church that work to heal those broken by life circumstances
- An ability and interest in helping members discern their gifts
- An ability and interest in developing opportunities for members to form relationships that fit their particular lifestyle and needs
- An ability and interest in calling and equipping members for ministry and leadership
- An ability and interest in dealing with conflict in the congregation

IV. Leadership Style

Leaders have different styles in the way they lead, accomplish goals, and make changes. The style that would best fit your church would include the following characteristics:

- Leads by delegating authority, assigning responsibility, and recognizing the contributions of others. Often is required to provide many of the programs with minimal support.
- Makes changes carefully, making sure that there are opportunities for input before changes are finalized and implemented

V. Core Motivations

A pastor who is a good fit for your church is one who can stay motivated over the long term. This means that he or she must be motivated by playing a central role as a solo practitioner and providing a range of services to a church and to the community the church serves. Enjoys multiple tasks and the freedom of being self-directed.

*Family-sized church	Under 50 worship attendance
*Pastoral-sized church	50 to 150 worship attendance
*Program-sized church	150 to 350 worship attendance
*Resource-sized church	Over 350 worship attendance