



Transition Summary and Vital Leader Profile

First Presbyterian Church of West Chester

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The Congregation Assessment Tool
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Holy Cow! Consulting
PO BOX 304
Westerville, Ohio 43086
888.546.4132
office@holycowconsulting.com

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:

- Exploring best practices related to reaching people with the message of God's love in Christ.
- Introducing best practices in family ministry that encompass parents, youth, and children.
- Helping leaders and members explore different options for building relationships in congregations today.
- Exploring different aspects of healing and how the church might become engaged in these.
- Renewing a vision for leadership by offering one or two high quality training experiences that increase confidence and effectiveness.

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 presence of the Pastor/Rector in times of crisis
- The quality of the worship experience
- The degree to which leaders are representative of the congregation
- The Pastor/Rector's work in bringing out the best in everyone

At least one of these factors may be urgent enough to require major attention in the transition and will likely need to be sustained by the next pastor/rector.

In addition, the conflict level in your church is high enough that it could make the recruitment and start-up of your next pastor/rector difficult. Leaders may need some outside resources in dealing with the conflict in the transition and should consider the services of a trained interim pastor.

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 desire to see a change in the direction of the church compared to the recent past. The transition can provide a good opportunity to identify areas where changes are necessary.
- Members desire to see a change in the skills and responsibilities of the next pastor/rector. The transition can provide a good opportunity to identify areas where changes are necessary.

V. Opportunities and Vulnerabilities

- Members indicate that their level of involvement during the transition will be very low compared to other churches. Since it may be difficult to recruit folks to key ministries, you may find it necessary to prioritize and temporarily put some less essential tasks on hold.
- 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 very low compared to other churches. You may need to budget conservatively over the transition and make some difficult choices.
- Members indicate that their likelihood of visiting other churches during the transition is very high. You may see a significant drop in worship attendance and involvement in other activities. You may want to take steps to strengthen the relational connections of members to one another.

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 a low level of confidence that the leadership is representative of them. During the transition, the leadership may find it helpful to open additional lines of communication.

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 moderately progressive perspective
- Knowledgeable regarding the dynamics of program-sized* churches and affirming of the distinctive opportunities for ministry that they offer
- Energized by the style of ministry that characterizes a regionally-focused rather than a community-focused church
- Attracted to books, articles, and resources that offer effective strategies and tactics for a church culture characterized by spiritual practice, acceptance, and healing

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 regionally based congregation where over 40% of the members live more 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 slowly increasing over the last three years
- A church where the income in the neighborhood within one mile of the church has increased more rapidly than the larger community over the last three years
- A theological perspective that tends to be moderately progressive compared with other, similar churches
- A culture that values spiritual practice, openness, and healing
- 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 high as a percentage of household income. Financially there might be some additional growth but it would require significant effort and planning.

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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 reshaping the ministries of the church to reach others and incorporate them into the life of the church
- An ability and interest in excellent preaching
- An ability and interest in creating a family life ministry that is effective in attracting parents, children, and youth
- An ability and interest in developing pastoral ministries that serve those in times of need
- An ability and interest in developing opportunities for members to form relationships that fit their particular lifestyle and needs
- An ability and interest in creating worship experiences that deepen members' relationship with God and one another
- An ability and interest in creating ministries in the church that work to heal those broken by life circumstances
- An ability and interest in creating a governance process that appropriately involves the members of the church in decisions
- An ability and interest in calling and equipping members for ministry and leadership
- An ability and interest in bringing out the best in everyone

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 recruiting and developing a team of leaders who can provide high quality programs. Seeks to provide ministry through lay leaders rather than direct involvement.
- 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 the challenge of mobilizing and training leaders to provide high-quality programs to a church and to the community the church serves. Enjoys the process of seeing lay leaders grow to take significant responsibility.

*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