

OUR PASTOR LEFT—WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW?

By Tommy Lockwood

From time to time, I will receive a call from another church seeking to find an interim pastor. Although, I serve full time in a church and unable to serve there, I will request an appointment time of ninety minutes with their church to offer some information, when they ask for a recommendation or some direction. I was blessed to meet with such a congregation last week and yet another one this coming Sunday afternoon. My purpose for meeting with them (although I will not be serving there) is to give them some guided steps to consider, before they move on their own without a pastor. It should be no surprise how lay people think things should move along in the church, after their pastor resigns. With good intentions, they can scramble to quickly find pulpit supply, organize a search team, and mistake the best ways to move forward.

In our brief meeting, I will gather information about their church, then give them a list of options (See list below) to decide upon. I, often, tell them they will choose one of the following in the days ahead.

After explaining all their options, I will guide them to what and how to choose the best direction. Before leaving, I may tell them my assessment to the top 2-3 options to consider. I will then pray with them and leave them to remain around the table to talk further. Often, I will get a call back for any clarity and to recommend an interim for them.

See if this will help you, in your interviews to become an interim or to consult briefly with them to find an interim.

INTERIM OPTIONS:

These are listed in order of their strengths:

Pulpit Supply Only: Mobilize search team immediately to look for new pastor with no consideration of needed transitions

Part-time Traditional Interim: can engage or not engage with administration, staff, events, ministry teams, etc...

Full-time Traditional Interim: does not attempt to initiate transitions, but rather carry on all present ministry assignments of permanent pastor, minus future planning and vision alterations

Part-time Transition Interim: Attempts to organize some stated transitions to better carry on the church with a new pastor

Full-time Transition Interim Pastor: Develops and mobilizes the church to discover, discern, decide, then deploy on every involvement of the church. For a church in

decline, a Transition Pastor involves transitions that removes and replaces the most declined motions of the church.

Part-time Consultant: Not involved with the day to day movement of the church's operation during the interim, but rather, works behind the scenes with groups of people to transition things necessary to transform the church to greater vibrance and strength. In essence, he does the intentional work, a traditional pastor does not do.

The consultant can work well with a traditional interim or pulpit supply, since he is not preaching, but do organized work with a transition team or groups within the church to create clarity, remove confusion, and help church to realize and perform their mission together. Assessments are done that call for considerations and decisions. This needed work relieves the new pastor of barriers and has the church energized for moving forward under his new leadership. In addition, it helps the Search Team to be centered and focused on the style, quality, giftedness, and best fit for the people of the church.

Each church should, prayerfully, consider which option is most glorifying to God and needed for their church.

Tommy Lockwood provides excellent guidance on his Facebook page "Transition/Interim Pastors Fellowship."