

# MEETING DAY PACKET

Including Docket, Survey and Worship Bulletin  
April 12, 2011 ~ United Presbyterian Church of Greenwich

New Business must be presented in writing to the Moderator prior to the meal  
Pre-Meeting Packets, Standing Rules & Basic Parliamentary Procedures are available at the Stated Clerk's table

## OFFICIAL BUSINESS including Reports, Articles and Supplemental Materials

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## Stated Clerk Report – Meeting Day Packet for April 12, 2011

### The following is presented for information:

1. One of the responsibilities of the Presbytery is as follows from the Book of Order:

*G-11.0103n. ... to find in order, approve, and record in the presbytery minutes the full terms of all calls, and changes of calls approved by the presbytery.*

COM is charged with reviewing changes in terms of call each year and recommending to Presbytery actions related thereto. As of April 7, 2011, the Stated Clerk has received changes in terms of call for 2011 for 21 of the ministers who are in called, installed positions in churches in Albany Presbytery. **This leaves 21 ministers for whom no report has been received.** Even if there are no changes in terms of call from 2010 to 2011, some report to that effect needs to be submitted. Normally COM reviews the changes in terms of call at its April and May meetings and brings a report and recommendations to Presbytery at the June stated meeting. The Stated Clerk has a list of names of installed pastors for whom no reports of changes in terms of call have been submitted for 2011. Ministers and clerks of session may check with him if there are any questions about this. Please help COM do its job and if you are a minister in a called, installed position, please make sure the requested change in terms of call report has been submitted for 2011.

2. As of April 7, 2011, the **Albany Presbytery Supplemental Session Report** has been received by the Stated Clerk from 44 of the 69 churches in Albany Presbytery. That leaves 25 churches yet to be heard from! While the requested deadline for submitting this report was February 23, 2011, it is not too late. Please try to get these missing reports in as soon as possible. The information contained in these reports is used by several Presbytery committees, and it is most helpful if the information is as complete as possible.
3. Many thanks to the clerks of session for updating their statistical reports electronically with the PC(USA) in Louisville in January and February. While it may seem like the reports are to the national church, they are actually to and for the benefit of the Presbytery, but received and summarized by the national church. Updated information was provided by all but three churches in the Presbytery, and the membership totals that resulted from the reports are included in the Stated Clerk Report in the Premeeting Packet.
4. A topic for discussion with and among the clerks of session at the upcoming Orientation and Peer Review of Minutes meetings will be the various annual reports. Please see the Stated Clerk Report in the Premeeting Packet for the schedule and locations of these meetings.

## Council Report – Meeting Packet for April 12, 2011

### The following is presented for information:

Council Moderator Paul Randall appointed the following to serve on the planning group for the proposed September 2011 Retreat/Meeting: David Bennett, Tim Coombs, Marcia Etu, Shannon Meacham, Kirianne Riehl, Dan Rogers, and Cass Shaw. The planning group held its first

meeting on April 6, 2011, and generated some creative ideas for how the time might be split among the following: business meeting segments; various forms of worship; and opportunities for fellowship. If the way be clear and Presbytery acts on April 12 to approve in concept the proposed change in format and location for the September meeting, the planning group will meet again on April 28, 2011, in order to flesh out some of the details to report to Council at its meeting on May 10, 2011. Council plans to report final details (costs, schedule, worship opportunities, participation by Vice Moderator Whitsitt) to Presbytery at the June Stated Meeting.

**Committee on Preparation for Ministry Report – Meeting Packet for April 12, 2011**

**The following item is presented by CPM for Presbytery action:**

CPM requests permission of Albany Presbytery to celebrate the Lord's Supper during the worship service that will be included in CPM's Consultation Retreat on May 22-23, 2011, at Camp Fowler.

**Rev. Albert Myron Nichols**  
**1914 – 2011**

The Rev. Myron Nichols was born on October 17, 1914 in Creston, Iowa. He graduated from UCLA (1936) with a degree in business economics, and a Bachelor of Divinity from the San Francisco Theological Seminary (1940). He was honored with a Doctor of Divinity degree by Occidental College in Los Angeles in 1952.

Ordained in 1940, Rev. Nichols was the founding pastor of the North Hollywood (CA) Presbyterian Church (1940-43), Associate Pastor/Church Administrator of the Pasadena (CA) Presbyterian Church (1943-57), and Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Pendleton, OR (1957-82). Upon retirement, he continued to serve as Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Eastern Oregon (1976 -1999). He and his wife Phyllis moved to Niskayuna in 2001. He transferred his membership to Albany Presbytery in 2003 and attended Presbytery meetings on occasion. Myron worshipped regularly at Union Presbyterian Church in Schenectady where a memorial service was held on March 17, 2011.

Nationally he served in various Boards of the Presbyterian Church (USA). For many years Rev. Nichols served as Assistant Stated Clerk of the General Assembly under Eugene Carson Blake.

In church related service, Rev. Myron Nichols served as a Founding Member of the Board of Trustees of Whittier California Community Presbyterian Hospital (1954-57). He was also a member of the Board of Trustees of San Francisco Theological Seminary (1963-84) and was a Life Trustee of Lewis & Clark College in Portland, OR. His interest in health also led to his appointment by the Governor of Oregon to the State of Oregon Health Council (1985-88) and to the State of Oregon Trauma Board (1987-91).

To: Albany Presbytery  
Date: April 7, 2011  
Re: PeaceMakers Task Force  
From: Rev. Bebb Stone

On March 12, 2011 eight persons gathered at Union Presbyterian Church, Schenectady to discuss peacemaking in Albany Presbytery. We are:

Judy Hartley, Westminster Pres.  
Sue Bramer, Schoharie Pres.  
Barry Gustafson, Saratoga Springs  
Linda LeTendre, Saratoga Springs  
Rev. Earl Johnson, Johnstown Pres.  
Rev. Larry Deyss, Delmar Pres.  
Rev Ruth Kuo, Union Pres., Schenectady  
Rev Bebb Stone, Schoharie

We voted unanimously at that meeting to apply for status within the Presbytery as a Task Force. While the budgeting application we submitted would take effect in 2012, we are ready to begin immediately. Therefore:

We respectfully request Albany Presbytery to authorize us as a task force, since there are 36 churches that have participated in the Peacemaking Offering over the past 3 years, demonstrating the intention to "seek peace and pursue it."

**Goals:**

To be a vehicle for Presbyterians and friends of Presbyterians\* within Albany Presbytery to make a social witness on matters of peace and justice, after the manner of "The Commitment to Peacemaking: Through Christ Jesus, the world is reconciled to God, and all humanity is offered God's peace. God's peace (shalom) overcomes brokenness and despair and offers us the possibility of wholeness and peace in our own lives, our families, our communities, and in the international arena."

**Our Work Plan:**

- To identify Presbyterians and friends of Presbyterians within Albany Presbytery who feel called by a passion for constructing peace; and to invite them to participate in the conversations of the task force;
- To build trust as persons of shared faith while we resist fear in order to act.
- To connect the task force to the several aspects of the Compassion, Peace, and Justice Ministry Unit of the P.C. (USA); the UN Office, the Washington Office, the Peacemaking Program; PHEWA; as well as Presbyterian Peace Fellowship and Voices of Justice, etc.;
- To share "input" (books, articles, studies) as well as possibilities for action (events, actions, statements, etc.) and
- To communicate regularly with Albany Presbytery in meetings.

**Staff support**

We would anticipate help from the Administrative Assistant in the Presbytery Office as we arrange conference calls, etc.; and some support from the Rev. Cass Shaw as General Presbyter.

**Budget (Estimated)\*\***

Travel expenses (reimbursement by voucher)	\$600
Food, infrequently	\$250.
Resources	\$100.
Connectionalism	
Peace Fellowship Membership	\$100.
PHEWA presbytery Membership	\$250.
Voices of Justice	\$50.
Miscellany	\$50.
Total	\$1400

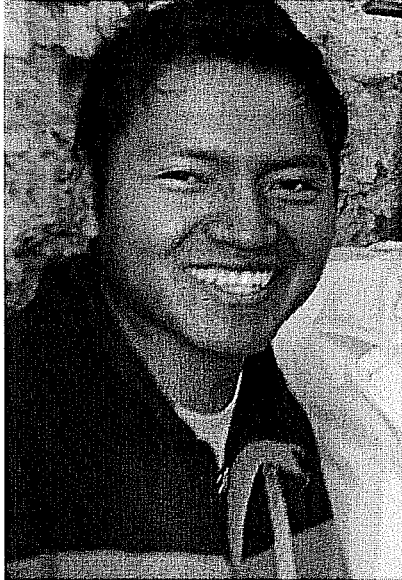
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\*covers members of federated churches within the bounds of Albany Presbytery.

\*\*It is our understanding that there are Peacemaking Funds currently in the budget.

# YOU ARE INVITED

Melvin Diaz is studying this year at the University of Delaware in Newark, DE, with support and sponsorship from the New Castle Presbytery, and from **April 16-19**, he and Jim Mosely, Executive Presbyter of New Castle Presbytery, will be visiting in Albany Presbytery. Melvin's father is the current moderator of the Mam Presbytery. The Guatemala Task force invites you to any or all of some events that are being planned for the time period.



## **SUNDAY, APRIL 17 (PALM SUNDAY)**

### **MORNING AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ALBANY**

9:30 AM Christian Ed with adults and youth  
10:45 AM Worship  
12:00 PM Luncheon--open to all.

Please **RSVP** to First Presbyterian Church **today, April 12** if you plan to attend. 449-7332

Directions to First Presbyterian are on their website:

[www.1stpresalbany.org](http://www.1stpresalbany.org)

### **EVENING AT TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, GLENVILLE**

6:00 PM Dinner

At this dinner, which will have a Latin American culinary theme, Melvin will be sharing some slides and other visual information, as well as telling some of his story and what he hopes to bring back to his country from the education he is receiving here.

We will also share information about the Guatemala Partnership work in general, what we have been doing on our trips there, what the goals and visions of the partnership are, how we see and experience God's work in our lives through this experience. The dinner is free of charge, but we do ask that you **RSVP by today, April 12** either by e-mailing Kathy Gorman-Coombs: [Revkqc@aol.com](mailto:Revkqc@aol.com) or calling the church (399-8782).

Directions to Trinity can be found at the website: [www.scotiatrinity.org](http://www.scotiatrinity.org)

Other events in the works include a dinner on Monday evening with some Guatemalan friends who live in the Granville area.

We of the partnership recognize that we do not always convey fully the depth and meaning of the experience of visiting Guatemala, of being in partnership with people so different and yet not so different from ourselves, of learning all we do from the example of their faith, their trust in the Spirit, their loving hospitality. It is a difficult thing to convey in a few minutes here or there at a Presbytery meeting--but it is very real--and, is also something for which we are very grateful for the support of the Presbytery for this ministry. We hope many will join us for one of more of these events as a way of becoming acquainted with this work--whether you have ever thought of joining us in Guatemala or not, you are a part of this ministry; mission dollars that originate in the churches is the source of support for this ministry, and the prayers and spiritual support of the Presbytery are part of what sustain the work as well. We hope to see you at one or more of these events.

Que Dios te bendiga,

The Guatemala Partnership Task Force

# THE PARISH PAPER

## IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

Coeditors: Herb Miller, Lyle E. Schaller, Cynthia Woolever - [www.TheParishPaper.com](http://www.TheParishPaper.com)

June 2011 - Volume 19, Number 6

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### What Is the Pastor's Role in Church Finances?

*Question:* How involved should the pastor be in making sure the books are in order, the bills are paid, etc.? How can the pastor act responsibly regarding the financial health of the church without micro-managing?

*Answer:* Most clergy eventually ask that question, usually in response to one or several problems. Which of the following ideas seem applicable to your church?

**1. Encourage distribution of a printed treasurer's report at every governing board meeting.** Tax laws hold governing boards of all non-profit organizations accountable for reviewing financial reports on a regular basis. Oral (non-printed) financial reports give treasurers inappropriate authority. Oral treasurer's reports encourage gradual development of a financial fiefdom in which one individual can bang a yes or no gavel on any new ideas that cost money. The result: resentment toward the treasurer and stifled ministries.

**2. Encourage the tradition of an annual audit.** A free internal audit procedure (done by a special committee) is available from some denominational offices and from [www.nacba.net/](http://www.nacba.net/) (National Association of Church Business Administration). Some large churches contract with a local accounting firm, which in conjunction with an audit can also provide advice for improving financial management. Annual audits protect the treasurer's reputation as well as the church's accounting credibility. Embezzlement happens in less than 1 percent of congregations. But why risk a truck wreck of such magnitude?

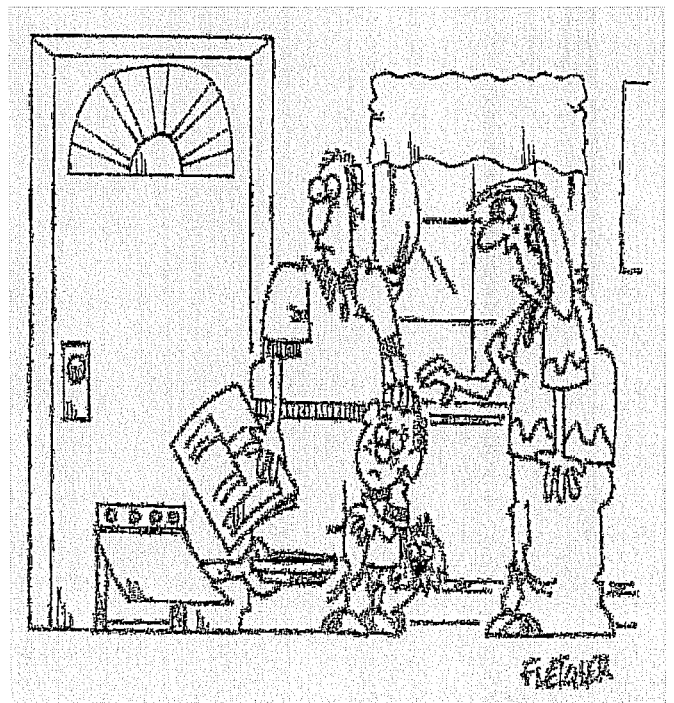
**3. Encourage the governing board, at least quarterly, to make the treasurer's report available to the congregation.** Some churches note this in the worship bulletin and stack copies in the narthex. While few people actually pick up copies, their availability increases donors' confidence that "someone is minding the store." Quarterly reports also inspire a few donors to give special over-and-above gifts.

**4. Encourage the financial secretary to mail quarterly giving reports to all "donors of record."** Say thank you in each one. Quarterly reports strengthen financial stewardship. Despite their best intentions, a few

people forget to give to the church during the first few months of the year (or think their spouse took care of it). If six months go by before they learn of their error, the amount they should send feels so overwhelming that they decide to send nothing and "start over next year."

**5. Encourage the appointment of a stewardship committee.** In addition to the finance committee (charged with budget-building and financial-resources management), congregations need a stewardship committee (charged with teaching stewardship through the annual stewardship campaign and a variety of year-around ways). In other words, the stewardship committee asks for the money and the finance committee manages the money.

Stewardship committee member qualifications: Appoint *only* people who believe in and practice giving a significant percentage of their income to the Lord's work through their church. Committees whose members lack that trait are rarely effective.



I think it's Doug...  
From the stewardship committee.

**6. Encourage both the stewardship committee and the finance committee to study and discuss “best practices.”** One possibility is *Herb Miller’s Nuggets Volume 5: How to Increase Financial Stewardship* (go to [www.TheParishPaper.com](http://www.TheParishPaper.com) and download from the “Free Resources” section. Along with its comprehensive finance and stewardship suggestions, this study/discussion volume (a) lists the thirty-one myth traps regarding church finances that circulate in church conversations and (b) helps lay leadership identify which myths are hurting their congregation’s financial health.

Examples:

*Myth Trap #5: “One of our wealthy, generous church members always bails us out when we get into a financial jam and at the end of each year.”*

This procedure risks dangers such as (a) gradual buildup of resentment by that generous individual, (b) damage to his or her spiritual health, (c) creating a benevolent dictator who makes most of the church’s financial decisions, (d) limiting the congregation’s vision to paying its bills, (e) financial disaster after that donor dies, and (f) limiting parishioners’ opportunities to grow spiritually by becoming generous givers.

*Myth Trap #8: “Christian people automatically commit themselves to generosity in financial stewardship—without any effort by governing boards and clergy.”*

Many pastors graduate from seminary with the conviction that they will preach the gospel with such compelling power that people will respond enthusiastically, the money will come in, and church finances will take care of themselves.

Wrong! People do not drift into good giving habits. They decide into them. Research indicates that 82 percent of church members decide to increase their giving if someone asks them in a positive way to consider doing so. An effective annual stewardship campaign is the best way to ask!

*Myth Trap #25: “The finance committee should take care of stewardship; pastors shouldn’t talk about money or be involved in the annual stewardship campaign and budgeting process.”*

One of the pastor’s major responsibilities is to build mature disciples. Financial stewardship is such a fundamental part of our spiritual relationship with Christ that authentic discipleship does not exist without it.

Pastors cannot wait until people grow spiritually so that they begin giving generously; some people cannot grow spiritually until they decide to give generously.

**7. Encourage yourself to feel comfortable about preaching and teaching financial stewardship.** A *Wall Street Journal* article said that 85 percent of clergy are untrained in the theology of stewardship and have no books in their libraries on stewardship, money, or giving.

Many pastors are uneasy talking about giving, percentage giving, and tithing, for several reasons.

Pastors are often

- Fearful that their parishioners will be irritated, or
- Fearful of appearing to interpret Scripture in a legalistic way, or
- Fearful of coming across as judgmental instead of pastoral and caring, or
- Fearful that people might think they are talking about money as a way of promoting the support of their own salary, or
- Fearful of having to examine their own giving habits.

Pastors overcome those anxieties when they

- Believe Ashley Hale’s assertion that “The giver is the principle beneficiary of the gift.”
- Understand that tithing and percentage-giving help people grow spiritually.
- Decide to practice appropriate personal giving habits.
- Have experience with annual stewardship programs that treat financial giving as a spiritual rather than a fund-raising matter.

Pastors of churches with generous donors teach and preach the biblical principles of financial stewardship. These pastors also provide theological and methodological advice, counsel, and leadership for the annual stewardship campaign plus other giving projects.

**8. Encourage people to recognize that churches would need to teach financial stewardship, even if they didn’t need the money to balance their budgets.** Jesus summed up the spiritual connection between money and our relationship with God this way: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:34).

That verse succinctly defines Christian stewardship: *treasure management that helps us to experience meaning and joy by escaping the trap of selfishness and keeping our hearts spiritually focused on God.*

Each of us makes one of two choices in life. We either become emotionally attached to our money or we become emotionally attached to God. Although we often hope to do both, in our hearts we know that cannot happen.

Financial stewardship helps us overcome the temptation to break the First Commandment and put a false idol first, instead of the God who came to us in Jesus Christ.

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### When Does Success Lead to Failure?

John graduated at the top of his seminary class. Bright and scholarly, he became the pastor of a small-town church. His teaching ability impressed parishioners, but the honeymoon was short. People complained that he (a) neglected important administrative details that pastors usually handle and (b) made major decisions without consulting the governing board. After two years, the personnel committee asked him to resign.

Ted completed his electrical engineering degree with a high grade-point average and became an electrical contractor. The business became famous for the number of secretaries and electrician's helpers who quit or were fired each year. Ted's church invited him to chair its property committee, but he soon resigned in frustration, complaining that committee members wouldn't cooperate.

What do John and Ted have in common? Through years of demanding study to develop specialized professional skills they became successful at managing *themselves*. When they transitioned into managing organizations that included *other people*, they failed.

**Transitions Are Tricky:** Any job or role in which we invest significant energy over several years wires our brains with unconscious thinking and behavior patterns. When we shift into a different job or role, we tend to retain some of those thinking and behavior habits, especially those that helped us succeed in our previous job or role. To succeed in new circumstances, we must refocus. Yet, refocusing is often far more challenging than we expect.

When clergy—or laypersons who become committee chairpersons—successfully transition into new roles, they must refocus in three ways: (a) the skills they use most, (b) the manner in which they use their time, and (c) the work on which they place the highest value—in other words, the activities that they feel are most important.\*

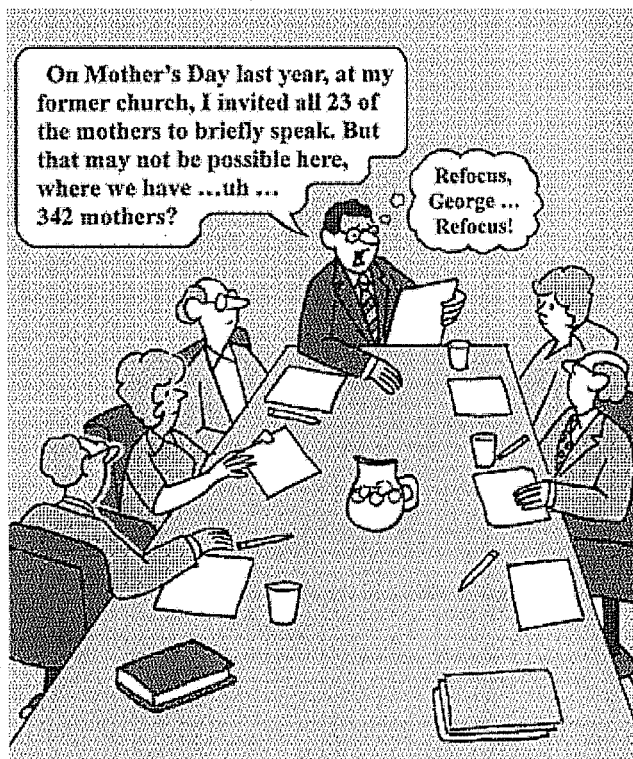
**Typical Transition Stresses:** Most seasoned church observers have seen the following instances in which success led to failure.

*From small-church pastor to midsize-church pastor:* After completing seminary, Beverly was very effective in her first congregation. Three years later, a midsize church that was six times larger in membership invited her to

serve as senior pastor. But the chaplain-style of leadership that Beverly had perfected in a small-church failed in this midsize congregation. To succeed here, she had to develop a Y-Director-style of leadership—in which she juggles the numerous priorities and activities of seven busy committees and several ministry teams.

*From midsize-church pastor to the large-church pastor:* Greg, an exceptionally gifted speaker, served as pastor of a midsize congregation. After five years, a church whose average worship attendance exceeded 1,200 called him as their senior pastor. But the Y-Director style of leadership that Greg had perfected in a midsize church failed in this large congregation. To succeed here, he had to develop a CEO-style of leadership in which he coordinated nine committees *and* fifteen ministry teams *and* a dozen staff members *and* a multi-million dollar budget *and* gigantic facilities on two campuses.

*From committee member to committee chairperson:* Jason, a skilled carpenter and plumber, served as a dependable trustee for several years. He often donated sev-



eral hours each week to small repair jobs so that the church wouldn't have to hire someone to do them. He felt honored when the nominating committee asked him to become chairman of the trustees. To succeed in this role, Jason had to learn how to (a) chair meetings in a way that guided the trustees through complex decision-making, (b) motivate the trustees to unleash *their* energy, (c) stay in step with the governing-board's policies and goals, and (d) work smoothly with the custodial staff.

*From church member to staff member:* Julie, a recently widowed single mother, had grown up in the congregation. A well-liked and active participant, everyone thought she would be perfect as the church secretary. But after twenty years of freely expressing her opinion about "what is best for our congregation," Julie had to learn that a staff member relinquishes that prerogative. An effective employee's loyalty is to the staff team and the senior pastor as chief of staff. She had to learn to voice concerns about policies and procedures *only* to the senior pastor and/or in staff meetings. She took great care never to say to her friends, "I think we should have done it differently"—because such remarks by an employee create conflict and ill will.

**Classic Causes of Transition-Failure:** Search committees and nominating committees often choose people because of their technical achievements at particular ministries. But committees are often unable to differentiate between people who can *do* and people who can *lead* others in doing.

Search committees and nominating committees often know how to select people with a specific talent. But committees find it much more challenging to discern whether those people fit their congregation's theological values and customs.

Pastors, staff members, and committee chairs often find that giving up the tasks and responsibilities that earned them a new position proves far more difficult than they expected.

People who have spent most of their time *doing* rather than *discussing* often tend to charge ahead with decisions, actions, and assignments—without sufficient knowledge and without clearing things with the appropriate groups or other staff members.

**Successful Transition Techniques:** For both church staff and committee chairpersons, valuing the productivity of others includes (a) conversing with committees and the governing board, (b) helping volunteers and paid staff plan ministry accomplishments, (c) motivating volunteers and paid staff to undertake and execute ministries, (d) monitoring the performance of volunteers and paid staff, (e) coaching volunteers and paid staff, and (f) rewarding volunteers and paid staff with praise and recognition.

*Effective leaders focus less on their own work-performance and more on the work-performance of others, especially by...*

- Defining and assigning work to be done, including communicating with committees, staff, and the governing board regarding needs, expectations, planning, organizing, choosing people, and delegating.
- Enabling volunteers and paid staff to do their work by monitoring, coaching, providing feedback, acquiring resources, problem solving, and communicating.
- Building social contracts by establishing respectful relationships with volunteers, staff, committees, and the governing board in ways that facilitate open dialogues and trust.

*Effective leaders accurately assess the work of volunteers and paid staff by...*

- Identifying (a) strengths and weaknesses, (b) the major one or two activities in which they spend the most time, (c) who they meet with and how often, and (d) what their priorities are.
- Discovering their impact on others, especially the people they supervise or cooperate with in other committees and staff positions.

*Effective leaders develop successful habits by...*

- Viewing questions from volunteers and paid staff as opportunities to help them succeed, not as interruptions that keep them from getting *their own work* done.
- Coaching volunteers and paid staff regarding how to do their ministries effectively, rather than rushing in to fix their mistakes.
- Refusing to distance themselves from the problems and failures of volunteers and paid staff; thus, teaming with them to achieve positive results.
- Taking seriously the role of motivating and supervising paid staff by (a) learning how to lead effective weekly staff meetings and (b) conducting quarterly coaching conferences with each individual they directly supervise.

**The Bottom Line:** Distribute copies of this page to your personnel committee, staff, or governing board. Ask them—without signing their names and without discussion—to underline the phrases in the "Successful Transition Techniques" section in which they feel you excel, to circle the phrases in which they feel your abilities need to grow, and put N/A above phrases not applicable to your position. Collect the pages. Total the circled and underlined phrases on a clean page.

The resulting tabulation is your roadmap to success.

\* These insights, adapted from *The Leadership Pipeline* by Ram Charan, Stephen Drotter, and James Noel (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), pp. 16-20, are as valuable in churches as in secular life.

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### Incoming Pastors: Building Smoother Transition Bridges

Thad did not have an opportunity to communicate with Harold, the outgoing pastor. Thus, some of Thad's information was patchy and secondhand—as people occasionally said, “That’s how Harold did it.”

Incoming and outgoing clergy communicate sparsely for three primary reasons:

- Departing pastors want to avoid giving advice—and arriving pastors want to avoid fending off suggestions.
- Incoming pastors are highly self-confident—so they don’t think they need information.
- Outgoing pastors want to avoid prejudicing incoming pastors regarding parishioners with whom they had less-than-positive relationships—and new pastors know that they may get on quite well with those individuals.

But this communication, plus five other information opportunities outlined below, can help incoming pastors build smoother transition bridges.

#### Talk with the Outgoing Pastor

The fruitfulness of such a discussion depends on asking the right questions in the right way. The following wording excavates valuable information:

1. If you were making a list of this congregation’s greatest strengths—what we are good at—what would you put at the top of that list?
2. If you were making a list of things in which this congregation is not as strong as you wish it were—what we are not good at—what would be the first one or two items on that list?
3. If you were making a list of this congregation’s most cherished values—what we think we ought to be doing if we are at our best—what would be the first one or two items on that list?
4. When people talk about the best pastor this congregation ever had, what did he or she do best?
5. When people talk about pastors who were not very effective, what did they do poorly?
6. When this congregation considers a major decision, what one or two highly respected people (whether they hold an office or do not hold an office) usually exert a strong influence in that discussion?
7. In your experience, is there a group that must affirm a new idea before it can become reality? In other words, what group can veto a new idea if it is not included in the discussion at an early stage?

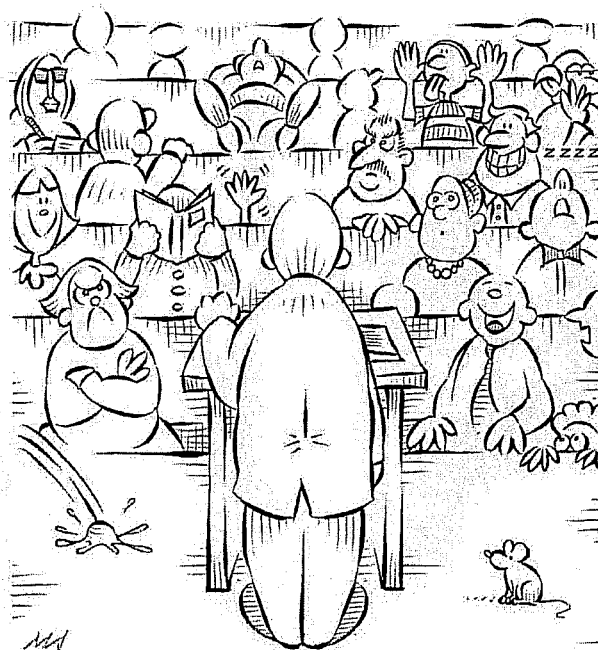
*Note to incoming pastor:* In small churches with fewer than 100 in worship attendance, such an invisible power group may number only one or two people. In midsize congregations of 100 to 300 in worship attendance, such a power group might be the choir, an adult Sunday school class, the women’s organization, or the trustees. In larger churches, the power group may be the executive committee, the governing board, or the senior pastor.

Outgoing pastors never have a perfect take on reality. But hearing their responses to these questions can save time, reduce stress, and improve results.

#### Talk with Three Highly Respected Laypersons

Conduct these conversations one at a time, not as a group. Ask these questions:

1. Looking back over the years, when was our congregation’s effectiveness at its highest peak, and what was happening during that period? (*These answers picture an ideal time to which a few older people will keep hoping the church can return.*)



After some jolting surprises, the new pastor thinks more historical information regarding this church might have been helpful.

2. Looking back over the years, what pastors were exceptionally capable, and what did they do best? (*These answers predict how several people will unconsciously measure the incoming pastor's skills.*)

3. During the past five years, what are some of the best things that have happened in our church? (*These answers illustrate values and experiences that were meaningful to numerous people.*)

4. No organization is perfect. Thinking back across the last five years, what are some things that seem less than positive? (*These answers identify why some people criticized the outgoing pastor.*)

5. Looking down the road at the next five years, if you were asked to list some of the challenges our congregation is facing, what would you put on that list? (*These answers reveal many of the church's cherished values.*)

Some of these answers inevitably surface (a) weaknesses in the present program and staff, (b) points at which the church has insufficient staff, and (c) major criticisms of the last pastor.

### **Talk with the Personnel Committee**

Meet with the personnel committee (called staff-parish relations committee in some denominations) during your first week on the scene. Say to them that your effectiveness depends on their willingness to communicate with you honestly, especially in personnel committee meetings. Begin that communication by asking *everyone* in the room to take turns answering three questions:

First, ask, "In your opinion, what one or two good things are happening in our church right now?" Listen carefully. Take notes. (*They are telling you what the congregation highly values.*)

After everyone shares, ask the second question, insisting that everyone give an answer: "In your opinion, what one or two issues should we be concerned about as we work together to build the best possible ministry for future years?" Listen carefully. Take notes. (*They are giving you some of the congregation's dreams.*)

Finish with a third question. Again, insist that everyone express an opinion: "Which of the several issues we just mentioned should we put on the agenda for review at our next meeting?" (*They are giving you some of the congregation's priorities.*)

Thank them for sharing. Say that you want to meet with them quarterly throughout your tenure (bimonthly is better). Urge them to save their comments for the personnel committee meetings, "where we can think about them together"—rather than coming to you one at a time with their concerns.

At each meeting, repeat the three questions. Listen carefully. Take notes. This procedure prevents domination by the committee members who are the most comfortable with vocalizing.

By listening to one another, the committee gains a sense of unity and desire to work together as a team with the new pastor.

### **Talk with the Congregation**

Schedule a series of home gatherings to which you invite twelve and not more than sixteen people (in a larger group some people will not express their views). Ask the following questions:

1. What factors drew you to our congregation?

2. What is one of the most important things that happened in our congregation since you began attending?

3. What are some of the best things you see happening in our congregation right now?

4. As we look down the road at the next five years, what are some of your hopes and dreams for our church's future?

Ask a reporter to take notes. After all groups have met, publishing the results in summary form can create unity and begin to build momentum.

### **Talk with the Staff**

Meet with each staff member during the first three weeks after you arrive. State that you want to get acquainted with "how we do things around here."

In preparation for their meeting with you, ask staff members to write a detailed description of what they do, their schedule, and to whom they report.

At the meetings, review those role descriptions and ask clarification questions.

Then, ask these questions:

- What one or two ministry tasks occupy 70 percent of your time?

- What one or two skills do you feel are most important for someone in your type of ministry?

- What one or two things do you find yourself doing that make you wonder whether they are a waste of time?

- What can I do to help you succeed in your ministry?

Staff members know some things that no one else in this congregation knows. Help them feel that they are on your team and you are on their team.

### **Talk with Everyone**

Involve the governing board, committees, and ministry teams in selecting priorities and acting on them. One such process is the *How to Accomplish Effective Congregational Planning*, downloadable free of charge from the [www.TheParishPaper.com](http://www.TheParishPaper.com) Internet site.

### **The Bottom Line**

A poster featuring a cute kitten quips, "Things are always at their best in the beginning." To make your first year better—plus your later years—learn as much as possible from people who've been around for awhile.

# **ALBANY PRESBYTERY GOALS 2008 – 2012**

*As the coordinating and visioning body of the Presbytery, the Council will be responsible to ensure that the work of our committees, task forces, boards and staff, as well as the budgets which finance our ministries, will focus on meeting our expressed goals. The Council will regularly report to the Presbytery on new initiatives and strategies being developed and their effectiveness in reaching these goals.*

## **GOAL #1 – Developing Vital Congregations**

Every committee, task force and board will develop specific strategies for training in various aspects of church ministry and in several locations around the presbytery.

The Committee on Ministry (COM) and Committee on Strategy will develop specific strategies for congregations who want to thrive.

COM will develop specific plans for new church planting in strategic areas in our presbytery.

The Commissioned Lay Pastor Program Task Force (CLP) will prepare candidates for commissioning as lay pastors and develop a variety of educational opportunities for congregations to explore the possibility of calling CLPs.

## **GOAL #2 – Strengthening Our Relationships**

### **Among Congregations:**

COM Strategy will broaden and strengthen mentoring strategies and support greater communication and collegiality between congregations.

COM will work with groups of churches – where practical and welcome – to develop strategies for shared leadership and ministry and will continue to update a *Yearbook of Prayer* for use by ministers and congregations.

### **Among Minister Members of Presbytery:**

COM will develop new pastoral care strategies, including a prayer network, pastoral support groups and triennial visits to those in validated ministries and a retired ministers' network.

COM will develop pilot projects in two congregations for a season of serious Sabbath observation as well as a pastors' retreat for the practice of Sabbath-keeping.

### **Between Presbytery and Congregations:**

COM, through its Triennial Visit Team, will work to improve the connection and mutual understanding between congregations and the presbytery.

The presbytery staff will develop new communication strategies, improve the website, broaden and deepen the content and distribution of the e-news and seek other ways to support, inform and inspire our member congregations.

### **Among Presbytery, Ecumenical and Interfaith Partners:**

The presbytery office and those elected to serve on ecumenical agencies, committees, task forces and boards will develop new communication strategies as we relate to CREO, CRIC, CACC, NYSCC, etc.

The Council and presbytery officers will develop strategies for collaboration on how local judicatories can more effectively support college chaplaincies and other joint ministries.

COM will develop strategies for sharing pastoral leadership with Formula of Agreement denominations.

Our ecumenical officer and others will reach out to other faith communities to foster mutual understanding and respect.

## **GOAL #3 – Increasing Participation in Mission**

The Mission Support Task Force will develop specific strategies for publicizing and supporting individual congregations in their mission outreach and promote joint mission trips among our churches.

The Mission Support Task Force will develop specific strategies for broadening and strengthening the Guatemala partnership.

The Mission Support Task Force will develop specific strategies for interpreting and promoting Presbytery, Synod and GA missions.