

STARTING WELL START WITH A PLAN

Preparing to Get Off To A Good Start

Getting off to a good start is critical for you and the church. This manual is intended to give some steps, processes, resources and insights into ways to make the first two years in a new church effective and foundational for the future. The materials gleaned for the manual come from a wide spectrum of ministry practitioners with good track records of starting well in a variety of churches and settings. The manual is intended to be a roadmap or guide for the first two years in a new church. It can be shortened, although we caution that, or lengthened as the situation warrants. But, at the least, it will give you some things to consider as you work to get off to a good start in your new church.

Start with a plan – The components given in this manual can serve as your plan for starting well. But here is deal - You will want to develop your own ministry plan. Without a game plan you will be tossed about by everyone’s agenda, and be assured there will be other agendas. Having a plan keeps you on track and gives you some guideposts to how you are doing.

Leadership in the first two years of ministry should focus on building relationships and preparing to lead the church through the early stages of a new pastor’s ministry. This preparation will influence the level of success in the crucial change-oriented decision-making activities during the years to come.

1. Get Acquainted with the Church membership.

Familiarize yourself regarding the church’s schedule of events, elected leaders, community resources, and its denominational resources. Give particular attention to the Church Leadership Team. The Church Leadership Team, sometimes called Church Council, is composed of leaders (chairmen, directors, and coordinators) of ministry and service organizations such as deacon ministry, Bible study (Sunday School), discipleship training, music ministry, and finance ministry. The team assists in coordinating and promoting activities essential to the applications of biblical principles in church practice.

2. Enlist and Meet With a Vision Team.

The Vision Team is made up of people already in the following elected positions in the church. However, members of the team may suggest that one or more other key influencers be added. The Vision Team will be the key working group with which a new pastor works in his first two years of ministry. Some of its work will be in subgroups.

- Church Leadership Team (Church Council)
- Deacon Officers
- Ministry Staff
- Chairmen of strategic committees or ministry teams (such as prayer, personnel, finances/budget, properties, and nominating)

- Key influencers in the church and/or community

The number of Vision Team members will be according to the size and needs of the church. A good rule of thumb is 10-50 people depending on the church's membership.

3. Schedule a Church Memories Workshop. Guidance for this workshop is found on pages 9-15.

4. Ask lots of questions.

During the first two years on the job, a pastor should be asking questions and listening actively to what people think and how they feel about the church and its history.

A focused way of doing this would be to hold some listening sessions, in which a pastor exclusively asks questions and listens to the thoughts and dreams of his church members. A guide for doing this is found on pages 5-6.

The Interventionist by Lyle E. Schaller contains hundreds of questions used in various stages of discovery in church consultation. Some of the following questions are from Schaller's question-filled chapter 11. Others are added for use in surfacing feelings about past and present experiences in the church. Some of those feelings may have been unexpressed for years. The questions may help people express hurts hidden beneath the surface and needs that might otherwise not be expressed in constructive ways.

Asking questions, listening, discerning, and remembering can inform your leadership and enrich your preaching.

5. Develop a Sequence of Process for leading through the visioning process.

Develop a Sequence of Process for leading the church through the process. That schedule will influence the church's calendar of events and the planning of worship emphases and your sermons.

Estimated times required for each of the stages are provided below. Special events and circumstances unique to each church and pastor will determine the actual time needed for each of the processes. However, the process should not be hurried to the point of moving to another stage before the prerequisite stage is completed.

- 16 weeks Preparing to Lead through the Stages of Visioning
- 8 weeks Stage 1: Viewing the Church's History through the Eyes of Christ
- 8 weeks Stage 2: Assessing the Church's Current Reality
- 8 weeks Stage 3: Affirming Biblical Principles for Church Growth
- 8 weeks Stage 4: Focusing on Kingdom Results
- 8 weeks Stage 5: Establishing Church Practice
- 16 weeks Stage 6: Using the Essential Church Strategy
- 16 weeks Stage 7: Overview of Transformational Church, DVD and Online Assessment

If this Sample Sequence of Process is followed, four months will be invested in getting acquainted and getting started and eighteen months in guiding the church in the development of a strategic vision and plan. Completing the get-ready process should lay the relational foundations for the process and address any negative emotions that would otherwise hinder it.