

Suggested Questions and Topics for Exit Interviews

Questions of the Pastor/Staff Member

How has the church changed during your tenure as pastor? How have you changed during the same period?

What have been your greatest satisfactions during the time you have been here? What have been your greatest frustrations?

What was the most frustrating and least successful task you performed while here?

How would you evaluate our congregation?

What are the particular strengths of this congregation? Where are our most glaring weaknesses? How would you suggest we begin to address those areas where we need to grow?

How was our church different from what you expected when you came?

What have you learned about the church during your time here that you wish you knew before you came?

How clear were the church's expectations of you in your pastoral role? Did you find those expectations to be reasonable, or not? Why or why not?

How have you felt about the issues pertaining to compensation and expenses? Are there changes we might need to consider?

How open to your leadership have you found the church to be?

Characterize the communication between you and the Church Council, staff and ministries?

Did church lay leadership follow through with their responsibilities or did it require reminding and prodding on your part?

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Have you felt that your gifts, talents and personality matched the desires and needs of the congregation? In what ways has the match seemed good, and in what ways has it seemed not so good?

What are the unmet needs in the local community to which churches could be responsive, but it appears not to be a high priority?

How effective is this congregation in making newcomers feel welcome and needed? What could be done to improve the assimilation of new members?

How receptive has the congregation been to year-round stewardship and evangelism? What changes might you suggest for our future work in these two areas?

What on-going problem or problems caused you the most stress, which you believed could be resolved, but never was?

Are there unresolved issues or conflicts, either in our recent or more distant past that you feel still need to be addressed and resolved?

Have you felt the church to be supportive and understanding of your efforts to take time off for your own rest and relaxation? Have you found the church to be respectful and caring in the way it has related to other members of your family?

What comments and suggestions would you like to make about our organizational and administrative structure and/or function?

What do you believe this church might want to consider for its long-term goals?

What were some important and valuable experiences during your ministry here?

What do you believe was your greatest contribution to this church and its ministry?

What factors did you consider when arriving at your decision to move?

(Multiple staff only) Was the work load appropriately distributed between members of the staff? Are differences in compensation appropriate to differences in experience, responsibility and assignment? Have you found relations between staff members to be open and supportive? If not, please describe your experience.

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Have you experienced questionable involvement or interference in the life of the church by former pastors and/or staff? If yes, in what way?

From your perspective, how well has the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee functioned? Do you have suggestions for ways the Committee can be more effective in its work?

Please leave us with some "pearls of wisdom." What advice would you give us and the leadership for the future of this church? What would you really like to say to us that you haven't yet had the opportunity to express?

From your experience, are there people with special needs, or problem people, who the next pastor needs to be aware of?

Are there any short-term issues that need to be addressed during the interim period?

Are there any issues relating to the church building that need to be addressed that we haven't been able to take care of?

Are there any current or past issues that could affect the long-term health of the church?

Questions of the Congregation Representatives by the Pastor/Staff Member

What have been the strengths of my ministry here?

What are some of the aspects, highlights and accomplishments of my ministry, which the congregation will remember with appreciation?

What have been the shortcomings or failings of my ministry, in your perspective?

What skills of ministry might it be beneficial for me to strengthen?

What are some of the most apparent patterns of my ministry?

What would you say to me that you haven't yet had the opportunity to express?

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Are the records of the church up to date? Have arrangements been made for transfer of other materials and knowledge that may be helpful or necessary for church leadership both during the interim period and then into the tenure of our new pastor? *(See checklist on page 1-3 of "A Local Church Seeks a Pastor" [the search manual] for suggested materials and information for a departing pastor to leave behind.)*

These questions are only suggestions. They may not all be relevant in your particular situation. On the other hand, the list is not exhaustive. There may be other issues relevant to your church which need to be discussed. Give thought to those other issues before beginning the interview.

Should you require other help in preparing for the exit interview, please contact Prairie Association Minister Kathy Lawes at 815-758-3497.