



Dear Parish Staff,

Over the next few months, the Archdiocese Clergy Personnel Board will be working with Archbishop Alexander Sample to finalize a selection of your new pastor whose term will begin on July 1, 2024.

Pastor transitions are paschal mystery experiences. The community of faith is extended an invitation to walk the road with the disciples – and one another – to discover God’s presence in and through the experience. It is a timeline of reflection, prayer, and celebration.

The time of pastor transition is a time of grace. It offers the possibility of renewal the parish staff, parishioner leaders and both transitioning pastors themselves. The attached checklists and information guides are not intended to replace the policies and procedures, but to enhance the smoothest transition.

There are actions that you can begin today to positively impact this time of transition. Rather than letting events dictate your experience, our team encourages you to recognize and take the positive steps to move through the various stages of change. Several reference resources can be found at: <https://evangelization.archdpdx.org/parish-transition>.

Archbishop Sample has asked several Pastoral Center staff to help navigate the transition process. Please take advantage of this opportunity and their transition expertise.

*“Do not fear, I am with you; do not be anxious; I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious hand” (Isa 41:10)*

Blessings,

The Parish Transitions Team



# PASTOR TRANSITION CHECK LIST

## *Phase 1: Endings*

### **Outgoing Pastor**

- ☐ Finalize Archdiocese Clergy Office transition Paperwork
- ☐ Coordinate your payroll & benefits between old/new parish
- ☐ Review files and coordinate notes for incoming pastor
- ☐ Clearly identify personal property with business manager
- ☐ Start early to ensure that the rectory and your office are cleaner than when you arrived
- ☐ Transition personal & parish expenses for subscriptions, mobile phone, etc
- ☐ Follow plan for transitioning keys, passwords and security
- ☐ Remove all personal files from the office and parish owned computer
- ☐ Meet with Incoming pastor (see checklist) and review status of the parish
- ☐ Communicate future calendar commitments with new pastor

### **Transition Planning:** *Strategic considerations for the transition*

- ☐ Create a parish transition team from staff, councils and school leadership.
- ☐ Meet with the Archdiocesan transition liaison to facilitate transition conversations.
- ☐ Ensure continuous communication within the parish as the transition proceeds.
- ☐ Communicate to as many people as possible through the transition.
- ☐ Complete the parish profile on the state of the parish for the new pastor.
- ☐ Plan for completion of any parish projects, renovations, or special programs
- ☐ Evaluate programs and calendars so that parish life can continue throughout the transition.
- ☐ Decide what must be done now, what needs to be changed, and what should wait.
- ☐ Continue activities that are important to the stability and self-identity of the parish.
- ☐ Develop a farewell celebration, celebrating the departing pastor's legacy
- ☐ Engage the Parish Transition Team to ensure a community-driven farewell.

## *Phase 2: The Neutral Zone - Awaiting a New Pastor*

### **Caring for the Parish Community**

- ☐ Focus on timely ongoing communication, a thread that binds us together.
- ☐ Hold parish information evenings, fostering understanding and openness.
- ☐ Host townhall meetings, providing a space for shared thoughts, ideas, and concerns.
- ☐ Conduct parish surveys, ensuring the community's voice is heard.
- ☐ Pray for the outgoing and new leaders, recognizing the power of faith in times of transition.

### **Prepare for the new pastor's arrival**

- ☐ Evaluate needs of the rectory: furniture, cleaning, repairs, painting.
- ☐ For significant renovations and/or redecorating, consult the new pastoral leader first.
- ☐ Schedule a team of volunteers to help with the move
- ☐ Extend an invitation to meet with the parish council and finance council.
- ☐ Create a welcome sign and put a welcome announcement in the parish bulletin.
- ☐ Prepare office area with new paint/carpet – new computer, email, phone, etc
- ☐ Update website, signage & other communications to reflect new pastor information
- ☐ Create a parish binder or other visual presentation with mass schedules, liturgical ministers, information about parish meetings, etc.
- ☐ Seek resources to assist the pastor to bridge the gap if there are cultural differences
- ☐ Have a parishioner name tag to wear at receptions and Masses
- ☐ Provide orientation to parish councils commissions boards and committees.
- ☐ Transition staff ask if pastor has any specific needs
- ☐ Help the pastor acclimate to the neighborhood and neighboring churches.
- ☐ Provide documents on the rich history of the parish for the new pastor
- ☐ Save bulletins for the past few months for the new pastor
- ☐ List how hospital visits and sick calls are handled
- ☐ Explain how expenses are handled for the rectory, auto, etc
- ☐ Take a vestment & sacred vessel inventory

## *New Beginnings- Getting to Know the New Pastor*

### **Welcoming the New Pastor**

- ☐ Collaborate with your pastor to create a united front in this exciting time.
- ☐ Anticipate the needs of the new pastor, showcasing the warmth of our parish family.
- ☐ Develop a parish profile, a testament to our vibrant community.
- ☐ Anticipate possible needs and concerns, offering support in every way possible.
- ☐ Provide orientation to parish councils, key leaders and committees

### **Moving Forward**

- ☐ Plan the new pastor installation liturgy with the Archdiocese Clergy office.
- ☐ During the ensuing year, gradually learn about the parish's priorities, history, and needs
- ☐ Work with staff, and community to identify assets and opportunities.
- ☐ Discover where new energy might be, and whether the parish could go in a new direction.
- ☐ *Prepare for major liturgical seasons*
- ☐ Notify parishioners if there will be any changes in major celebrations.
- ☐ *Acknowledge change dynamics and adjustment work, which are likely to continue for at least six months or longer*
- ☐ Continue to ask for support from the archdiocese as needed.
- ☐ Continue personal prayer and learning.
- ☐ Keep the parish community informed about changes
- ☐ Prepare parishioner meet and greets in homes over the summer

## ***Task Lists for Pastor Change***

### **Do**

- Trust that the Holy Spirit is working in your community and is involved in all your work. Consistently seek opportunities to be renewed and transformed by word and sacrament. Overcommunicate! Most people need 7-17 repetitions to internalize new information. Most of us communicate 1-2 times and assume the message has been heard and understood. During transition, ideas get lost as “noise,” and require an additional 5-10 exposures.
- If you make a mistake, admit it, apologize, and move on.
- If asked about plans for change, respond by saying, “It’s too early to talk about making changes. We are looking forward to collaborating and working together.”
- For incoming pastoral leaders: Schedule one or more parish-wide meetings shortly after you arrive.  
People are often worried about the transition. It is better to introduce yourself as the new pastoral leader early on, even if you have few answers to offer.
- Listen, ask questions, and pray whenever controversies arise and when things go well. Be relentless in discovering those responsible for successes and thank them.
- Be welcoming.
- Plan your work and work your plan.
- After the transition has passed for 9 to 12 months, consider scheduling a retreat or other activity to renew mind, body, and spirit.

### **Don’t**

- Every transition is unique. Do not make assumptions prior to taking the time to listen and collaborate. It underserves everyone. During the first 60 days, don’t make changes to personnel, liturgy, or church facilities unless absolutely necessary or otherwise directed by the Archbishop for the overall health of the diocese. Your community is already navigating a significant change – a new pastoral leader. Do not compound the task by introducing more change than necessary in a given amount of time.
- Don’t openly critique the previous leader. This behavior builds false intimacy, hinders credibility, and reduces trust. A community can focus on issues that need to be addressed without fostering a spirit of criticism.
- Attitude is critically important during the transition process. Fear-based attitudes and behaviors can hinder transitions. Faith-filled attitudes and behaviors can cultivate interior peace as well as contribute to a successful and fruitful transition.
- Don’t make comparisons about gifts and limitations among current and past colleagues. With each change, we often are gifted with new things we may not have known we needed.