

Twelve Points for Pastors Beginning a New Pastorate

1. Every church has an existing culture. Culture is a living thing because it's made up of the assumptions, understandings and relationships that exist in the church. There will be some things that will be similar to where you've been but other things that will be very dissimilar. Culture can change, but slowly, and for wise pastors, initiate change with fear and trepidation. Learn the culture first.
2. In every action, sermon, Facebook post, newsletter, comment and change, there are consequences. Some can be what you are looking for, but there are also always unintended consequences. The wise pastor does the due diligence to sort out the unintended consequences and decides the value of the change you want.
3. Lay out a prayed-over, well-prepared and researched plan for the next three months in detail and the next year as an overview. Knowing where you are going allows you to do what you do well, but it also gives you freedom for the basic ministry of pastoral care and preaching that is essential for success as you lay a foundation for, prayerfully, many years of effective and growing ministry.
4. Build relationships, build relationships, build relationships with leaders, stakeholders, influencers, community leaders, neighboring pastors and staff as quickly as possible. Know them and help them get to know you. You can do nothing without the support of these men and women who will make your vision for the church happen or not happen.
5. Lead your church. People desperately want leadership. They want to do well. They want a vision to follow. They want to make a difference. They want to experience God. They want you to be successful. They want to support you. People don't follow titles, they follow people they trust and who they believe care about them and their church.
6. Learn, learn, learn and learn as much as you can about your community or communities, leadership, schools, demographics, other churches, neighborhoods, growing areas, declining areas, and in the same vein, learn about your church. The past history, active and inactive people, budget, any past, present or future building programs, and programs of mission that exist. Know more about your church or churches than even the most faithful member.

7. Discover their traditions, new ones, and older ones — traditions that define the self-image of the church and those that just exist because they exist. Treat them with respect. If you choose to make change, be sure it is a necessary one and required to achieve the vision that God has given you and that you have taken the time and energy to bring the church onboard. It is easier to add something than take something away or change it.
8. Develop partners in ministry. Develop mentors and confidants. Develop learning and growing resources. Develop day-by-day a growing relationship with Christ.
9. Communication, communication, communication — assume they don't know, even if you have already told them. In worship, social media, email, hard copies, bulletins, announcements, communicate yourself, the mission and vision and those things you want them to celebrate, pray for, give to, support and be a part of.
10. Never let up on a sermon. This is still the center of every successful ministry and without which few positive things can happen. Change, grow, learn, practice, prepare, watch other successful pastors, read, go online and preach well, please. Don't preach to the people you used to have or wish you had but who you have. Pastors make the best preachers because they know to whom they are preaching.
11. Reveal survey criteria for success in ministry and the church:
 - ~ Get people moving;
 - ~ Create ownership;
 - ~ Pastor the local community;
 - ~ Embed the Bible in everything.
12. Christ is always at the center — of you, your preaching, your ministry and life of the church. Pray a lot and invite others to pray with you, and then pray some more. It's okay to pray for success in this new place.