

Good Ideas for a Move

For many people, the thought of moving brings with it a sense of being overwhelmed regardless of whether you have six months or six days to prepare for the event. Moving means pulling up roots and then actively replanting yourself in a new home, a new community, and a new life.

As United Methodists, we have a heritage grounded in John Wesley's circuit riders who traveled to spread God's word wherever they were needed. Today, "itineration" is real to you as you find yourself preparing to move to serve a new church. Whether you are moving alone or with family or with pets, this is a time when life may be exciting and/or it may be excruciatingly difficult. At the times when our lives feel overloaded, we may have difficulty sorting out just what needs to be done to help us transition to the next stage.

In this section, you will find concrete ideas and suggestions to help facilitate a smooth move. The reality of how to get it all done and determining what needs to be done is one place to begin your journey.

Before the Move

Pastor-Prepare Ye the Way

- Prepare the way for your successor. Help provide him or her with information and introductions to key areas and persons in the life of the church and the community. Begin to prepare the congregation to welcome and receive a new pastor gladly.
- Meet with the new pastor when possible to give an overview of the church's ministry, goals, and vision. Utilize the time together to answer questions and share information that will contribute to the health of the church.
- Resist any desire to share information that may prevent the incoming pastor from being free to express his or her own vision for the church. Allow yourself to surrender any unfulfilled dreams you have for your ministry with this particular church so the incoming pastor can find a receptive environment to nurture his or her own dreams.
- Recognize that both of you are colleagues in ministry and both are experiencing a move. Consider how you might mutually support one another.

Who's Who

- Discuss with your successor what you can do to be helpful.
- Remember some new pastors appreciate background on congregational members either from you or from a trusted member of the congregation while others want to approach new people with no preconceptions.
- Do your best when you are discussing people to provide only necessary information in an unbiased way.
- Do not share information that will not contribute to the health of the church.
- Do not prejudice the incoming pastor by making specific comments about specific members.
- Provide a list of churches in the community. Include the pastors' names and phone numbers; highlight the names of those in charge of the ministerial association or those on-call when a pastor is out of town.

Administrative Checklist

The following items should be prepared for the incoming pastor to facilitate a smooth transition. Enroll the assistance of church leaders to spread out the administrative work and to ensure everything is current and in order for the incoming pastor.

Membership & Other Records

- Be sure the membership roll is current and up-to-date.
- Provide a list of all changes to the roll since the last charge conference.
- Make a list of homebound members, phone numbers, and directions to their homes.
- Provide a record of baptisms and marriages.
- Provide pertinent files: Charge Conference records, Annual Report forms, etc.

Pastoral Care

- Provide a list of those needing close pastoral care due to serious illness, recent deaths, etc.
- Provide a list of scheduled weddings requiring premarital counseling.
- Provide a list of area hospitals and nursing homes with their phone numbers and information about how to obtain clergy identification, if needed.
- Provide a list of members in college or in the military. Include addresses and any notes that may be helpful.

Personnel/Church Leadership Volunteers

- Provide names and positions of persons employed by the church and terms of their employment.
- Provide a list of who is responsible for the bulletin, newsletter, etc.
- Provide a list of Administrative Board/Council members.
- Provide a list of Sunday school teachers, youth leaders/workers, etc.
- Provide a list of individuals available for pulpit supply.

Policies

- Leave a copy of all church policies-for child safety, building use, weddings, funerals, personnel, etc.
- Leave information in reference to any ongoing arrangements with individuals or groups-AA, Boy or Girl Scouts, etc.

Church Schedule

- Provide a meeting schedule for Board/Council, Committees, UMM, UMW; UMX, etc.
- Provide dates for events scheduled by the church. Include annual events such as Christmas Bazaar, Soup Kitchen, Mother-Daughter dinners, etc.
- Provide information pertaining to pending legal matters-wills, possible liability situations.
- Provide a list of continuing ecumenical experiences, such as a community Thanksgiving service with the local churches rotating the host church.

The Church Building

- Leave your set of keys, well-identified.
- Provide name(s) and phone numbers of those who open/close the building(s) on Sundays.
- Put together a file of any warranties, maintenance contracts, and manuals on all office equipment, heating/cooling systems, etc.
- Be sure the pastor's office is cleaned thoroughly and in good repair.
- Leave a list of any maintenance items requiring attention or a schedule of things on the docket.

Parsonage Administration

- Leave a set of keys, well-identified.
- Put together a file of all appliance manuals and warranties-refrigerator, dishwasher, washer, dryer, heating/air conditioning unit, etc.
- Identify switches or fuse box circuits.
- Leave your new address and phone number in the parsonage and church office in the event any mail needs to be forwarded to you.

Household Checklist

At Least One Month Before Moving Day

(or as soon as you know you are moving if it is less than a month)

- Begin to gather moving supplies, boxes, tape, and markers. Let the sorting and packing begin!
- Secure a moving company or make a truck rental reservation.
 - Review the conference policy for estimates from movers.
 - Choose reputable movers. Ask for suggestions from the church or current pastor regarding ones they have had good experiences with.
 - Consider getting estimates from movers where you now live and from your destination. Sometimes, significant savings can be found.
 - Be specific when you provide information to the movers for estimates. Watch for ambiguous information in an estimate. Be clear on whether or not the bid includes an assumption for a certain number of boxes; some movers tag additional costs beyond a set number of boxes.
 - Determine if you are selecting replacement value or a flat amount for damages, if you decide to secure Insurance.
 - Make sure you have a written contract of your agreement, for full cost of the move.
- Obtain an IRS Change of Address form (Form 8822) by calling 1-800-829-1040 or by going to the IRS website, www.irs.gov and then clicking on "forms" to download a request form.
- Contact the Board of Elections in the county of your new residence to request a form to change your voter registration.
- Notify the post office of your change of address. From your local post office, you can pick up change of address packets, including change of address postcards.

- Change your address with any magazines or other periodicals you receive. Many have a toll-free number listed near the front of the publication under subscriptions or on their web site. Remember some require 60 to 90 days to activate a change.
- Email friends or businesses if your email address will be changing with your move.
- Request medical, dental, and veterinarian records for all family members and pets. You will need to do so in writing to include a signature of release. Some doctors will release copies directly to you while others will require the records be sent directly to your new doctors.
- Schedule a parsonage review to allow a walk-through and list-making of repairs or improvements that need to be made. Prioritize the list for those things needing immediate attention and those that can be scheduled over time.

About Two Weeks Before Moving

- Be sure the phone and other utilities are in the church's name to avoid the need for security deposits and to ensure the current phone number will be continued. If the phone and utilities are in the current pastor's name, you will need to request they be listed in the church name or your name.
- Notify your insurance company of the changes to your household and/or car insurance policy addresses.
- Notify your Internet service and cable providers of termination of service date.
- Inform your long distance phone company of your move.
- Arrange to close or transfer your bank account.

The Day Before Moving

- Supplies: Put together a box of any supplies you may need, including a few small packing boxes, scissors, tape, a marker, tools, etc.
- The Essentials: Pack a special box of bed linens, pillows, towels, toilet paper, alarm clock, and phone for the first night in your new house. Include any tools you will need to put beds together. Mark the box well or keep it with you so you will be ready to put the beds together that first night without completely unpacking everything. If your new home needs shower curtains, make sure you pack the hanging rings with your curtains, or your first soothing shower could be days away.
- A Comfort Box: Pick some things that will pamper you a bit—a favorite CD and your CD player, a comfort treat, phone numbers of friends (so you can call if you have a "dark night of the soul"), a favorite book, and a bottle of Tylenol for those aches and pains. If you are moving with a family, take time to create a family comfort box. Be sure everyone selects some items of personal comfort and fun.

The day of the Move

- The outgoing pastor is responsible to leave the parsonage clean, ready for the next family to move in including leaving the lawn mowed. Whether the outgoing pastor's family does the cleaning themselves or hires a cleaning agency to come in all carpets should be cleaned, floors washed, kitchen appliances cleaned, garage and cellar swept and trash removed. The church trustees can make arrangements for further cleaning – washing windows, painting, repairs.

Note – if the parsonage is not left clean the DS will be notified and the out-going pastor will be billed for cleaning charges by the church, as outlined in our conference clergy handbook.

After The Move

Unpacking

Take time to get unpacked before you throw yourself into the work of the church. You need to get settled, and if you moved with your family, all of you need to be a part of this process. Unpacking will only be harder if you wait, and it will become an energy drain.

- Try to get one space—perhaps the living room—in good shape as soon as possible so you will have one space where you can escape the clutter of boxes. Creating a sacred nook where you can enjoy your home and retreat and renew until the rest of the home comes together is a good thing!

Getting Oriented

- Get maps of the local area so you can begin to get oriented.
- Schedule some "drive around" time to see your new town. Stop in some local shops and businesses; tell the people you are new in town and ask what you should check out in the area. Most people are glad to share their knowledge.
- Plan a day of exploration after you have moved. Make it fun and adventurous. Journey with your family or, if you moved alone, invite someone to join you for the day.

- Subscribe to the local paper. Begin to watch for activities that might interest you and would allow you to become acquainted with your new town and perhaps meet some people.
- Be mindful, if you have children, that children depend on adults to help them figure out how to adapt to a new environment. Encourage their involvement in the activities and opportunities that include other children or teens.

Kids Get Oriented

If you are moving with school-aged children or teenagers, an opportunity to see the school and check out other kids from afar is very important. A change of schools is a major transition for all youth and requires extra planning and sensitivity. If at all possible, try to visit the school while it is in session and things are "real." Allow some unstructured time to walk around the building, see the playground, look at the bathrooms, and visit the cafeteria. Some ideas for the structured part of the visit are listed below.

School Visit Checklist

- Request a school calendar so you will know the grading periods, beginning and ending dates, and days off.
- Request a school handbook.
- Request your child or teen's class schedule, or if they cannot register yet, ask for a copy of a typical schedule for their grade.
- Ask the hours of the school day.
- Inquire about bus transportation, or if your teen expects to drive, ask about the car policy.
- Inquire about special services you are interested in-such as tutoring or advanced program classes.
- Inquire about the school's college prep curriculum if you have a college bound teen. Also ask about the percentage of graduating students who go to college.
- Inquire about what vocational training is available if you have a teen interested in vocational training.
- Inquire about job placement assistance after graduating.
- Inquire about what sports and clubs are available. Find out if they meet/practice during the school day or at other times. Find out if your children will still be eligible to try out or be involved in activities their first year of the move. Some schools establish teams, etc., very early while others encourage newcomers.
- Inquire about your child or teen's teacher {s} and ask about his or her teaching style.
- Ask if your child could meet and connect with a peer in advance of your move.

Take Time for Your Life

Stay connected with your friends and people who will support and encourage you.

- Stay connected with your spiritual disciplines. Although times of transition place extra demands on our time and energy, it is important to maintain our regular patterns of keeping faith with God.
- Recognize the importance of ritual and routine. Personal and family rituals should be maintained and perhaps some new ones should be established. Rituals and traditions remind us of who we are and what is important to us. Are some of your rituals and traditions having meals together as a family or meeting your friends every Friday night for a meal out? Or having a regular movie night or Saturday morning walks or hike? Consider establishing some new self-care routines and shaping your new home so it will have its own identity as "home." Be intentional in honoring your rituals and traditions. Remember maintaining routine for children and teens is crucially important.
- Stay connected with your friends and people who will support and encourage you, especially during this year of transition. Utilize phone calls, letters, and email to nurture those connections and to care for yourself.
- Establish clear boundaries for your time off for Sabbath, fun, and renewal. You should designate and honor a day off for personal time as well as for time with those in your inner circle. Set reasonable expectations for work time. Although ministry often feels like a job 24 hours a day, it is important to adapt and take adequate time for meals and spiritual, physical, and emotional renewal. The old saying says it best: "You cannot pour water from an empty pitcher."
- Take a vacation your first summer. Taking time to renew and replenish yourself will allow you to pastor the church better than if you were to work straight through the summer. If you have moved with your family, they will appreciate some family time being honored as well. A new year in a new place is always better with some time away.