

Pastures New

transitions and relocations

This resource has been designed to support ordained and lay people as they leave one ministry and context and enter another. It consists of five mini-modules made up of reflections, questions and exercises to support the transition and aid learning. It is presented flexibly so that a 'pick and mix' approach can be taken, enabling the most relevant resources for the individual and the context to be used, as appropriate.

created locally, made for sharing

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The **Methodist** Church



Pastures New: transitions and relocations

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Guidance Notes

General guidance

This short resource offers a number of reflection tools to help individuals who are moving from one ministry context to another. They are presented as mini-modules with each comprising different thoughts, reflections and questions. Each of the modules focuses on a particular aspect of the transition process.

The mini-modules are designed to raise questions rather than provide answers. The questions and exercises might lead to further questions and reflection opportunities. Some of the questions asked are 'thick' or 'blunt' and are designed to begin the reflection process. Others are more subtle and nuanced, designed to enable focus, discernment and be a prompt to action. The goal is to get to those 'so what' questions and reflections.

As the questions are considered and the exercises are undertaken, ask God to bring into focus, or bring to mind, the things that are significant. If something resonates or triggers something, record it and develop a plan to respond to it.

For reference purposes, this resource draws on the theological reflection work of Patricia O'Connell Killen and John De Beer, namely offering a process of:

1. Defining Experience
2. Defining Feelings
3. Defining Images
4. Developing insight that leads to Action

There is no obligation to do all the mini-modules. People will be at different stages in the 'Pastures New' process and the modules used should reflect this. You might do one session or a few, and might do several modules in a session or just a couple.

Encouragement is given to meet individuals where they are at and adopt a 'pick and mix' approach to what mini-modules are undertaken. Good facilitation skills are required to make the most of this resource, and these include making good use of: effective questioning techniques; active listening; recognising participant learning styles; building rapport; and being encouraging.

Self-guided options

If a participant is a reflective learner, then this resource could be used in a 'self-guided' way. There is no obligation to do all the mini-modules. Participants will be at a particular stage in the 'Pastures New' process and the modules they undertake should reflect this. They might do one at a time, a few at a time, a few each day over a week - whatever suits best.

Participants are encouraged to write down your responses so that they can reflect upon them further, and act as appropriate.

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1. Setting the Scene

The next chapter and kairos – our first mini module

And so the next chapter begins ... the time at one place has come (is about to come) to an end and time at another is about to begin. It might be a chapter that is filling you with delight, hope and a renewed sense of energy, or it might be a time of anxiety, dread and frustration. It may be that you are leaving a comfortable and familiar place and entering an unknown and uncertain place and space. You could be leaving somewhere secure and certain and beginning an adventure into uncharted waters. Equally, it may be that you are leaving an old hostile and conflict-ridden place and hoping for peace and sanctuary in the new. You might be sad to be leaving, delighted to be getting away, or perhaps uncertain of your emotions, thoughts and feelings.

κairos καιρός

(n.) the perfect, delicate, crucial moment; the fleeting rightness of time and place that creates the opportune atmosphere for action, words, or movement; also, weather

So, does this feel like a *kairos* moment?

Is it:

- perfect;
- delicate;
- crucial;
- the fleeting rightness of time and place; and
- an opportune atmosphere for actions, words and/or movement?
- what is the [faith, spiritual, emotional, mental] weather like?

The lines have fallen for me
in pleasant places; indeed, I
have a beautiful inheritance.

– Psalm 16:6 ESV

A verse from Psalm 16 expressing confidence and certainty; perhaps a current reality, or a future anticipation? How do you respond to this verse?

When you STOP and LEAVE ...

What will you be leaving behind?

What things do you want to leave behind?

What things do you want to put down?

What will you do with the history and learning of where you have been?

"You have stayed
long enough at this
mountain" Deut 1:6

have you been here long enough?

Which mountains have you been at long enough?

What does
ending well
look and feel
like?

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2. Leaving

How does the end, and leaving, sit with you?

In this mini-module we will think a little more about the timing of the leaving. We will reflect upon the things that come to mind about how the end of what 'has been' has been, and give some thought to any sense of loss ...

We are told by one of the wisdom writers that 'there is a time for everything ...'

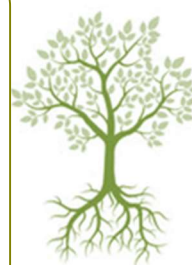
- To what extent does this feel like the right time to be leaving?
- Has the timing come about through divine providence, chance, or calamity?
- How do you sense that leaving is part of your calling and destiny?

Can you identify any words or an emoji that would sum up your sense of leaving?

I'm feeling...



As you leave the place you have been rooted in, it might be time to take stock and – as well as uprooting things – it might also be time to prune back the things you have been doing. Is there anything that needs to be pruned? Think about: focus; activities; pleasures; vices; the good branches and fruit; habits; and/or relationships.

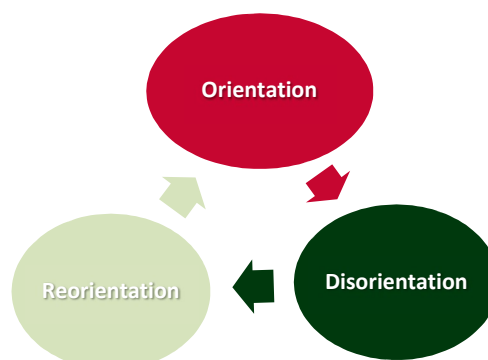


“You get a strange feeling when you're about to leave a place ... like you'll not only miss the people you love but you'll miss the person you are now at this time and this place, because you'll never be this way ever again.”

Azar Nafisi

It is not unusual to experience a sense of grieving and loss when we leave something we have invested our lives in. Even if we are pleased to be leaving, we may - once that relief of going and that initial excitement of the 'new' has passed – encounter feelings akin to bereavement. Perhaps sadness, mourning, regrets ... watch out for those moments of melancholy and grief attacks. Can you identify any?

Walter Brueggemann observes that the Psalms take us through a process of orientation, disorientation, reorientation. It may be that this is what happens to you when you leave the place you have known. You were well orientated there, but now feel a little disorientated, and in the days to come you may find yourself reorientated. Recognising the *kairos* we are in, can be very helpful in dealing with the challenges it presents. How, and where, do you think/feel you are?



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3. Transition

In between the leaving and the new

You might not have much time or space between leaving one place/thing, and starting another. Just for a moment we will imagine that there is a pause. In this mini-module we reflect on the good things of where we have been as we prepare to enter what is to come.



Where you have been: you may think you have achieved a lot; you may consider you have not achieved very much. However, research suggests it is not the things we do that people remember, but rather who we are.

What legacy of 'who you are', are you leaving at the place you are departing?

Not to dismiss our 'doings' entirely, what things have you done that you consider to have left a legacy?

Memories

The Bible dictionary says that the word "Remember" is found in 47 verse(s), 28 chapter(s) and 19 book(s) of the Bible. God often asks us to 'remember'.

- What will you remember about the place and people you are leaving?
- What will be your cherished memories?
- What 3 words would sum up your memories of the place and people you are leaving?
- What have been the things God has said to you and taught you that you will remember as being significant for the whole of life/ministry, not just the place you are leaving?
- What do you remember being grateful for in the place you are leaving?
- What will you remember bringing you joy?

Capturing the positives from where you have been

Think back over your time:

- What moment/incident comes to mind that was very positive?
- Is there an image in your mind – right now – of something good that happened?
- What experience did you facilitate that was highly positive?
- Words are powerful – can you recall something somebody said to you that was very encouraging or affirming?
- Might there be a colour, smell, weather, atmosphere that conjures up positives thought for you?
- 'Who' was good for?

- Spirituality
- Infinity
- Divinity
- Nature
- Wisdom
- Creativity
- Vibrancy

RED
ORANGE
YELLOW
GREEN
BLUE
INDIGO
VIOLET

RESONANCE: The things you connect with in a meaningful, deep and poignant way ... sometimes when we are in transition times, we look for the things that resonate with us to give us a sense of position and familiarity. Imagine a rainbow with the 7 colours: red; orange; yellow; green; blue; indigo; and violet. Pick one thing for each colour that resonates with you, brings you joy or peace and spend a moment or two reflecting on the contentment of that resonance. For example, you may love lemons and the freshness they offer, you may like to wear purple (close to violet) clothes because they make you happy, your favourite sports team may play in blue etc. Stay with these images for a while and see if God speaks to you.

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4. Relocating

All things new

In this penultimate mini-module we consider the new chapter of your journey in life, with God; the new context into which you minister and serve; and the new relationships making up the communities you are becoming part of.



NEW RELATIONSHIPS

If you imagine for a moment that you were writing an autobiography and your next job/appointment was the next chapter:

What do think you might call the new chapter, and why?

What do you need to find out about your new context: things about the church(es) things about the community(ies); practical things for you; and things to aid your work/life balance?

In your next appointment, what sort of relationships do you need to sustain you and ask God to provide?

Who are 'you' in the new?

- What are your spiritual gifts?
- What makes you excited?
- What is your stage of life?
- Are you an introvert or an extrovert?
- How spontaneous are you?
- What do you consider your main job to be?

What do you want from your new role; what is your ideal or dream scenario?

What can you do to bring about these ideals/dreams?



The diagram to the left is Franck Lake's Dynamic Cycle.

From the world's point of view, you need to start by achieving. This gives us a sense of significance, which then in turn, sustains us. Finally, if we succeed through all our own efforts, we might have a chance to feel accepted.

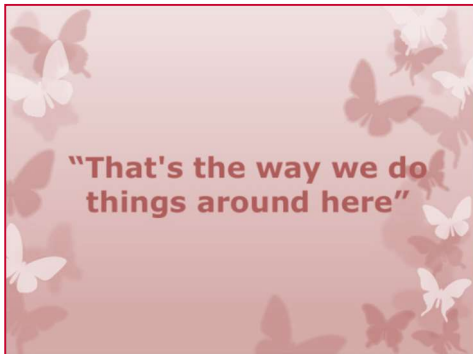
God sees it differently! Because of His grace, we are accepted. This is the root of our well-being and this sustains us. We are children of God and our identity is 'in Christ'. This gives us significance, freeing us to go out and achieve. In your new place/role, how might you resist simply being valued by your achievements?

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5. Beginning the New

Pressing the start button

The final module goes to the heart of hitting the 'start' button in the new.



The quotation to the left is often used to describe culture; organisational culture; and church culture. So, how will you find out how things are done in your new place and context? Who are the gatekeepers, curators and permission-givers. How might you find some quick win/wins in the new? Will you work with the culture or seek to be counter-cultural? You could keep a journal/simple portfolio as you enter the new to record the answer to these questions and aid your ministry.



What about changes – changes from the old way of how you did things before, and changes from how things were done in your new context?

When will you make some?

What might they be?

What will the new way look like?

