

Sabbatical Transition Checklist for a Solo Pastor

Use this checklist to delegate responsibilities and prepare your church for your time away.

Worship & Preaching

- ☐ Schedule weekly pulpit supply (guest preachers or rotation)
- ☐ Prepare worship themes or lectionary outlines (optional)
- ☐ Coordinate with worship/music leader or volunteers
- ☐ Ensure communion services are covered (officiant or elder-led)
- ☐ Communicate service formats or liturgy expectations

Pastoral Care

- ☐ Designate elder(s) or trusted leaders for pastoral visits and check-ins
- ☐ Assign someone to handle hospital visits or emergencies
- ☐ Inform congregation of care contacts during sabbatical
- ☐ Prepare care team with guidance for grief, crisis, or conflict

Administrative Tasks

- ☐ Assign someone to check and respond to church email and voicemail
- ☐ Appoint person(s) to handle mail and banking
- ☐ Review and delegate financial oversight (e.g., payroll, bills, deposits)
- ☐ Ensure bulletin/newsletter gets produced weekly or as needed
- ☐ Arrange who will oversee building use and maintenance

Leadership & Ministry Oversight

- ☐ Delegate leadership of weekly staff or ministry team meetings (if applicable)
- ☐ Ensure someone is checking in with ministry leaders (kids, youth, etc.)
- ☐ Assign liaison to church board or council
- ☐ Plan for key ministry events (e.g., VBS, outreach, baptisms)

Communication

- ☐ Notify congregation of sabbatical dates and purpose
- ☐ Set up an out-of-office email response and phone message
- ☐ Communicate clearly what kind of contact is permitted (if any)
- ☐ Provide emergency contact protocol (e.g., elder chair, spiritual director)

Documentation & Delegation

- ☐ Provide a contact list for key volunteers, leaders, and vendors
- ☐ Share calendar of upcoming events and deadlines
- ☐ Leave instructions for routine or seasonal tasks (e.g., heating system, trash)
- ☐ Ensure passwords and keys are shared with appropriate people

Spiritual & Relational Support

- ☐ Plan a sabbatical commissioning or sending service
- ☐ Encourage prayer support team for the sabbatical
- ☐ Prepare re-entry timeline and post-sabbatical debrief plan
- ☐ Express gratitude and blessing to those filling in