

reinventing transitions

by Seth Hix, CBFNC Minister
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Transition is a way of life. In fact, we all live in the midst of change whether we recognize it or not! Some changes are obvious, like the pictures we take of our children on their first day of each school year. As we get older we tend to define personal transitions in terms of life events such as birthdays, graduations, marriages, jobs, etc. Some changes are not as obvious, such as shifts in ideological or theological perspective stemming from maturity, education, or unexpected life experiences. Changes such as these are just as significant, yet more difficult to quantify than our yearly physical growth.

Churches and the ministers who are called to lead them also undergo significant change all the time. Yet, congregational transformation is not always readily apparent on the surface since collective direction is greatly influenced by the individual change experienced by the people in our pews. In church circles, we often think of congregational development in terms of membership: *growth, plateau, or decline*. While this terminology still holds value for many congregations, other churches are finding it more difficult to identify metrics that adequately capture the nature of transformation within their congregational life. Transition is not always about numbers. It is often more thoroughly expressed through shifts in identity, mission, and ministry.

CBFNC churches across our state are also undergoing a wide variety of changes. Some are more apparent than others. Tangible indicators such as church staffing, budgets, and worship/Bible study attendance are easily traced. Internal conflict, wrestling with societal concerns, and reforming ministry programs are not always immediately visible on the surface.

It is clear that as congregations undergo significant change, so too do those who have been called to lead them. Shifting congregational priorities and resources has a direct effect on the everyday lives of those who are called to vocational leadership within the church. In 2017, Baptist ministers across our state are in the midst of a variety of substantial changes. Altered job descriptions, added responsibilities, modifications to compensation packages, and breathing new life into long-

standing ministries are just some of the pressures ministers face.

This is the context in which CBFNC wants to partner with local congregations. We want to assist congregations and ministers during their unique times of transition. To do this well, we too must continue to adapt our approach to best reflect the realities of congregational life. Over the past couple of years, CBFNC Ministerial Transitions has also been in the midst of transition. Here are a few ways in which we are adapting our work with local congregations and ministers.

- We have moved from a **one-person approach** (*with the incomparable Jack Causey!*) to a more collaborative approach which includes multiple people across our state.
- We continue to adjust the ways in which we **train and prepare** local ministerial search teams to do their work. The logistics of committee work often incorporates new technologies, quicker timelines, and more thorough assessing.
- Because we also recognize the direct connection between **ministerial development** and ministerial transitions, we offer access to reduced cost (*sometimes free*) coaching for new ministers.
- We have developed new materials (printed and digital) to provide committees with **guidance and resources** for every step of the process.
- We have changed our online submission forms as we partner with CBF Global to share the **LeaderConnect** database. Access to these (more extensive) forms is available on our website under the “Careers & Calling” tab.

Amidst all of these changes, we want to retain the hands-on approach to Ministerial Transitions that has become synonymous with CBFNC. These unique opportunities for collaboration help us live more fully into our partnership with local congregations and ministers. It is our prayer that through this work we will strengthen our relationship with local congregations and ministers. As we walk together with each committee and candidate, we hope to facilitate the revelation of God’s plan for Baptists in North Carolina.

*A transition period is a period
between two transition periods.*

George Stigler