



ON-BOARDING

HELPING PASTORS START STRONG

WHAT IS ON-BOARDING?

On-Boarding is a simple process for clergy beginning a new appointment to "jump start" their ministry and leadership in their new church.

This strategic meeting happens after the clergy person arrives for their new appointment and is usually scheduled for a date soon after he or she begins their new role. The earlier the better! Some pastors say it gave them six months advancement in relationship building and one year in valuable information.

On-Boarding responds to two challenges:

- The first is - How do you learn about the new church quickly and sooner, rather than stumbling upon some important information later?
- The second is - How do you create a bond with key volunteers, staff and lay leaders who need to advise you, support you, and have your back? After an on boarding experience, they will celebrate you!

A new leader On-Boarding experience can radically transform feelings of anxiety to excitement and clarity. This powerful experience is well established and time tested in organizations where a great premium is placed on starting well.

The South Georgia Conference is offering two ways for clergy to use the On-Boarding process to get a "jump start:" working with a consultant.



MANAGING RISK THROUGH ON-BOARDING

The emotional experience between being appointed and assuming the pulpit is typically extraordinary. As news spreads throughout the receiving congregation, speculation begins about the wants, style, and preferences the new pastor may represent. On-boarding intercepts assumptions, and provides a proven process for the new pastor to evaluate and respond to structured questions.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID:

"The onboarding process was done with the staff. They took the process seriously and we were able to share expectations and note some landmines to avoid. The quickness of shared information has resulted in support and being able to maneuver around and through the landmines.

I believe the most important part is to be clear, very clear about shared expectations. This is the most valuable tool of the onboarding process. - Chrisy Bandy

"On-Boarding created connection and momentum right out of the gate. I was able to understand where the church was and the direction they were going without having to watch and guess for six months. The church was also brought on board with my sense of calling and leadership style that accelerated our work together."

- Jay Tucker

"Onboarding has been an invaluable tool for getting started and up to speed in a new appointment. The time spent with leadership and staff not only gives space for the pastor to learn but also for the congregation to dream and gain clarity about their mission, ministry, obstacles, and opportunities. I recommend that every pastor entering a new appointment take advantage of onboarding. - Jonathan Smith



THE PROCESS:

The most effective way to on-board new clergy is to rely on the expertise of a trained facilitator to help your team proactively share information in both directions: team to pastor and pastor to team. There are variations for staff and lay leadership experiences. While most on-boardings can be done in one day, others with larger teams may need a two-day (afternoon/morning) experience. On-boardings with staff typically take place during the work day, while those with laity often take place on the weekends or after work on a weeknight.

Consultant meets with laity or staff team without the pastor. They go through 5-13 questions based on need and context. Each question is responded to orally and written on chart paper for future reference. Names are not included and are to remain anonymous. When all questions have been answered, the consultant meets with the pastor individually for 15-20 minutes to review the answers. Then the pastor comes back in the room and addresses the information presented with the team, encouraging, asking questions, and thanking them for their honesty and investment in the process. The consultant then prays over the ministry of the pastor and the work of the church in this next season.

To Request a Facilitator contact Anne Bosarge at abosarge@sgaumc.com or 912-270-0474. She will assign an On-Boarding facilitator, who will personally consult with the incoming pastor. The pastor becomes the client and ultimately makes the final decision to participate in the process of on-boarding.

Cost for a Certified Facilitator from our conference is \$100.00 to be paid after the on-boarding is complete.

INVITING YOUR TEAM

Inviting laity: Normally the chair if the SPRC will send an invitation to all lay leaders in your church, inviting the church council, trustees, finance team, SPRC, and any other committee members necessary for helping the pastor get a good sense of the church. In very small churches, this might be a meeting of the entire church.

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am writing to invite you to an important On Boarding Dinner scheduled for Thursday night, September 2nd from 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

We will be led through a process by an experienced On-Boarding Facilitator who has been certified to lead these meetings for the UMC. We will learn about our new pastor, advise him/her about our church, discuss our hopes and dreams, share any concerns we have about this transition in leadership as well as what we hope from his/her new leadership.

Please arrive on time to fix your plate and be ready to go at 5:30. This will be a strategic conversation critical to setting the stage for _____'s tenure as our Sr. Pastor. I encourage everyone to be present and participate. Please RSVP to _____.

While the questions are being asked by the facilitator, _____ will not be present, so the data will be anonymous. _____ will return and address our advice and questions and be in dialogue with us so there is understanding.

Come prepared to be honest about what's on your heart as we live into the mission of the UMC to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Inviting your Staff Team: With a staff on-boarding, the invitation should come from the new pastor. A sample invitation is below:

Dear FUMC Staff,

In a few weeks, I will become the new senior pastor of ABC First UMC. I've already heard many wonderful things about the ABC church and its gifted, dedicated, and professional staff. I'm looking forward to coming to ABC, and I'm excited about working with you to lead our congregation in carrying out the church's mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world!

With that in mind, I'm inviting you to participate in a special staff event planned for Tuesday, June 24th. I've asked one of our SGA consultants to facilitate an on-boarding for us to help us get to know one another as we begin our ministry together. This event will allow me, as incoming minister, to learn from you, receive advice from you, and help us plan together for a successful future in ministry.

HERE'S THE PLAN:

On Tuesday, June 24th the facilitator will meet with you in the morning starting at ____ a.m. (without my being present, although I will kick it off and leave). You will be asked a series of questions, seeking your honest input. I am not present so all the advice and questions collected will be anonymous. Afterward, all of you will have lunch together while I meet with the facilitator. This will take place between _____ and _____. I will be coached in the process so that I can lead the afternoon session and respond to your advice and questions.

Please make every effort to attend this important event. Your input, ideas, and suggestions will be invaluable to me, and the experience won't be able to be duplicated later. You will need no special preparation, just bring your willingness to be honest, and a readiness to share your experience in ministry and your ideas for a new beginning for us all. Please confirm your plans to participate in this event by contacting me at zzz@abc.com by (date). I've already begun praying for you and your ministry at ABC First UMC. Please include me and my family in your prayers as well, especially during this time of transition.