

GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

Ready to Move On?

Most pastors don't like to think of their present church ministry as a stepping-stone to another one. However, while some pastors remain in the same church for decades, the reality is that pastors move every year from church to church.

When is it time to move one? It can be difficult to determine when to call it quits and when to stay put. Before throwing in the proverbial towel, take time to assess your situation. Here are some questions to ask and answer truthfully before deciding to leave or stay.

1. Do you have unfinished goals?

Pastors often take positions because they can see a clear vision pathway for improvement of a particular ministry. Once they accomplish the vision or goals they had in mind, it's natural to feel restless. You need to ask questions like, "Where do I want my ministry to be in 5 years? 10 years.?" If you have finished your goals, and cannot discover an exciting new vision for the future, it might be time to move on to a ministry that excites you more.

2. Do you have learning opportunities available?

Pastors usually take ministry positions that provide challenge and opportunities for personal growth. After serving in a ministry for several years, some feel that they've mastered the job and start to feel less challenged. Does your church ministry provide for study leave, assistance in skill development through further training, or financial help to obtain the services of a coach? If so, it might be best to stay and take hold of the growth opportunities that are available. However, if your ministry does not support learning options for you, it might be time to move on.

3. Do you have productive working relationships?

Human resource specialists say that people remain in a job based on the quality of workplace relationships. Pastors know that it's certainly easier to work with some people more than others. If working with some people is affecting the quality of your work, it

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may be time to take action by negotiating better working relationships. If the personal dynamics do not get better, it might be time to move on to a new ministry.

4. Do you have a healthy working environment?

When you wake up in the morning, are you excited to go to work? Do you look forward to your daily tasks, or do you feel stressed to the point that it's not fun any more? If the stress is so great that it's affecting the quality of your life, you need to see if you can change your work-day patterns to create a more relaxed environment. Talk with those who oversee your work and see if you can reduce your load, or find more resources, or eliminate demands. If you can't find a way to design a healthier work environment, it might be time to move on to a new ministry.

5. Do you find the quality of your work satisfying?

Pastors, perhaps more than others, like to feel they are making a difference in people's lives, as well as in the life of the entire church. Thus, it's important that you sense the work you are doing is contributing to important change in the world. If your role and contribution is not personally significant, it is wise to consider the options for a change within your current ministry. If that is not possible, then it might be a time to move on to a new ministry.

6. Do you feel valued and appreciated?

While pastors do not serve primarily for recognition, everyone desires to have some level of appreciative feedback. If your church or ministry doesn't provide regular feedback or recognition, give some thought to what you'd like to see happen. How would you like to be appropriately rewarded, recognized, or noted? Talk to the board or other leaders to see if some process for demonstrating appreciation can be set up. If some system for recognition, reward, or appreciation cannot be designed, it might be time to move on to a new ministry.

7. Do you need more time to be effective?

How long have you been in your present ministry? Studies continue to demonstrate that ministry effectiveness usually takes place following 6-7 years of faithful ministry. The most difficult year often is year six, but if you stay and work strategically, ministry turns around in year seven. So, if you've been in your ministry less than six years, it's usually best to remain another year or two to see what changes. However, if you've served seven or more years without fruitfulness, it might be time to move on to a new ministry.

Is it time to move one? Thinking through each of these seven questions may give you fresh insights to inform what is a very personal decision.

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Building the Body *12 Characteristics* *of a Fit Church*

Just as physically, healthy people might not actually be fit enough to run a 5K, so churches can appear healthy—with no obvious issues, maintaining a healthy size—but not exhibit fitness.

A fit church is one that is not satisfied with merely coasting along with no problems. A fit church is actively making disciples, maturing in faith, developing strong leaders, reaching out to the community, and more.

Building the Body unveils the twelve characteristics of fit churches and shows pastors and church leaders how to move their church through five levels of fitness, from beginner all the way to elite.

Here's what others are saying

“Building the Body powerfully draws on the biblical imagery of the church while taking the concept of church health to a whole new level. Becoming fit is presented in a way that motivates rather than produces guilt, and the combination of principles and practices applies to churches at all levers of development.” — Wayne Schmidt, general superintendent, the Wesleyan Church

“Practical steps to the next level—that’s what this book offers. Wherever your church lies along a continuum of twelve factors (e.g., outreach, stewardship, worship, disciple making), McIntosh and Stevenson give concrete strategies for advancing to the next level . . . and then the next level . . . and then the next level.”

—Donald R. Sunukjian, chair, department of Christian ministry and leadership, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

“A practical, informative, doable resource for leaders and churches who want not only to get better but also to get as strong or fit as possible for the good of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.”

—Jim Dunn, vice president of church relations, Wesleyan Investment Foundation

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“All fit churches are healthy, but not all healthy churches are fit.”

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