

# CENTERING YOURSELF IN YOUR CROSS-RACIAL/CROSS-CULTURAL APPOINTMENT

Transitions are also periods of acute vulnerability because new pastors lack established working relationships in a new appointment setting. Opinions of your effectiveness begin to form quickly. Once formed, they are surprisingly hard to change. These opinions can form quicker and be even harder to change for CRCC pastors appointed to congregations different from their race, ethnicity, and culture. An intentional strategic plan for your first 90 days can better position you and the congregation for fruitful ministry together. This worksheet serves as a reference tool to resource you toward this endeavor. Consider answering the questions below to help guide you in your first 90 days and, ultimately, create a plan for intentional engagement with your congregation.

## THE FIRST 30 DAYS (after your first day/first Sunday/first week)

### MEET WITH THE WORSHIP PLANNING TEAM

- Learn about the worship rhythms and any cultural or traditional worship practices you should be aware of by asking the following questions:
- Are there significant special services I need to know about?
- What holidays and Holy Days are traditionally observed in worship?
- Is everything done by an order of worship, or is the congregation familiar with extemporaneous prayers and speech?
- Who is involved in the worship service other than the pastor?
- How diverse is worship leadership?

## RESEARCH OF THE COMMUNITY

Along with your leaders, study the demographics of the community surrounding the church. This will give you the opportunity to get to know the church's neighbors while allowing leaders to become acquainted with any community changes.

Consider going into the community with trusted church leaders and talking with the people. While this knowledge isn't always immediately accessible, consider the following questions when seeking to understand your community context:

- Who are our neighbors?
- Do we know our neighbors, and do they know us?
- What do they know (or believe) about us?
- Are we still the people they believe us to be?
- Do we have a relationship with our neighbors? If not, are we open to forming relationships?
- What would need to change or happen for us to form better relationships with the community?

Research the church's social media accounts and church website. Consider using the below questions to guide you.

- Is there old information that needs to be cleaned up?
- Is there a social media presence? Does it reflect the stated values of the church? Does it accurately reflect the congregation? Is it welcoming to other races/ethnicities in the community? Does it reflect the partnership between the pastor and congregation (who may differ ethnically/culturally)?
- Is there a social media presence? If so, what process does the church have to capture its social media engagement?

## 31-60 DAYS

### MEETING WITH LEADERS

Schedule intentional time to meet with the leaders to learn about the church ministries and past partnerships with the pastor. Consider using the below questions as a guide for intentional relationship-building with leaders:

- How long have they been members/in their current leadership role?
- How are authorities and responsibilities shared between the pastor and lay leadership?
- What support/leadership do they need from you?
- What expectations do they have of you as their pastor?
- Share your call story and what led you to this place at this time.
- Share hopes for kingdom partnership with the leaders.
- Talk about the roles and celebrations of various ministries and anything you should know about their involvement and participation.

### SMALL GROUP LISTENING SESSIONS

Invite church members to host small group gatherings in their homes (or at the church if people aren't comfortable) for the pastor and membership to get to know each other. Possible discussion questions are below:

- What led them to the church? How many years have they been members?
- What about the church brings them joy?
- How has this church helped them grow spiritually?
- What about the community surrounding the church brings God joy?
- What about the community breaks God's heart?
- If resources were not an issue, what would you love to see our church do?
- The pastor can share their call story, information about their family/background and other pertinent information to help connect with members.

## 61-90 DAYS

The focus during this time needs to be on translating the insights from the previous 60 days into action. Consider engaging some of the actions below in concert with church leaders:

- Continue researching, observing, and learning. This process will be ongoing work in the ministry.
- Begin lifting insights from gatherings with leaders and small groups. Quotes from the leadership team and congregants allow them to hear from each other and let them know you are listening and their voices matter to you.
- Work with leaders to set goals and celebrate quick wins to help gain trust and build excitement.
- Make sure to empower and equip rgw laity, showing them you are a team player and you all are in this together.
- Schedule monthly meetings with SPRC, and/or your core leadership team to pray, plan, evaluate, address concerns, and keep the lines of communication open.
- Take some time to listen to difficult people. Listen with a discerning ear to hear beyond their presenting issue. What they present may not be the actual problem. Also, be careful not to take things too personally. A comment or critique may feel personal toward the pastor but may reflect the parishioner's own brokenness/wounds. How can you be their pastor at this moment, no matter how difficult they may be? (This does not mean a pastor should allow themselves to be verbally or emotionally abused.)
- Meet key community stakeholders.
- Continue visiting church ministries.
- Find ways to communicate success to the congregation.
- Celebrate the first 90 days of your ministry and cast vision with church leaders for the next few months based on your continued learning and observation.
- Meet with and build relationships with other clergy serving cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments.
- Meet or check in with your district superintendent. Share any major concerns asking for input on challenging issues.