



# The **22** Most Common Mistakes Made by Church Leadership Teams During a Time of Senior Pastoral Transition

*(Really Really Dumb Things that Really Smart Leadership Teams Do!)*

- 1. Neglecting Prayer as a Priority**  
*Hit the Pause button. Take a deep breath, fall on knees and humbly seek the face of God.*
- 2. Failure to take a Holistic Approach - Piecing a Transition Plan together**  
*A Church in transition must have a unified cohesive plan.*
- 3. Failure to Engage with Church Health Best Practices**  
*A Church must address complacency, apathy and ignorance in regards in missing essential elements of the Church. Address that which has been neglected.*
- 4. Failure to Appoint an Interim Leader / Pastor**  
*An interim leader provides the congregation with a sense of stability, consistency and peace.*
- 5. Refusal to Seek Outside Help. Operating in a Vacuum**  
*Outside consultants provide valuable insight. Denominational or network affiliations can be extremely valuable.*
- 6. Trying to “business our way out of this mess”**  
*Must humbly look to the leading / guidance of the Holy Spirit.*
- 7. Proceeding with a Capital Campaign in the absence of an Identified Lead Pastor**

*People traditionally do not give to capital campaigns in a time of uncertainty.*

**8. Not proceeding with church-wide initiatives in the absence of an identified lead pastor. (VBS, Mission Trips, Small Groups, Evangelistic Outreach)**

*People do not want the church to tread water during an interim.*

**9. Doing Superficial Cosmetic Work before doing the Hard Work of Structural Retooling.**

*It is easy to press ahead in an attempt to look good to candidates before the foundation of the church is stabilized. You can't build a home on a crumbling foundation.*

**10. Ignoring weighty past issues with the mindset of "Today is a new day. It's time to bury the past and look forward"**

*This neglects the need to process, heal and grieve.*

**11. Failure to tell the truth. No truth = No Trust.**

*Recovery is nearly impossible when a church perceives they were deceived.*

**12. Manage Sin.**

*Covering sin, hiding sin and spinning sin will ultimately destroy a church.*

**13. Not counting the cost – both financially and personally.**

*Giving will likely drop in the short term. Delegation is essential as no one person or group can bear the burden alone.*

**14. Following the Advice of Attorneys over the Guidance of Scripture**

*Maintain integrity even if that means losing the church. Obey God's law rather than man's law. Far too often, the truth is not told during a pastoral transition.*

**15. Filling the Pulpit with an External All-Star Preaching Lineup**

*During an interim in a large church, the pulpit should be filled internally. External guest preachers do not know the congregation which leads to disengagement, withdrawal and church shopping.*

- 16. Form a search committee too early.**  
*There must be a season to refresh, retool and refocus.*
- 17. When a pastor leaves amongst dissatisfaction with his performance, during the search process, swinging the pastor pendulum to the opposite side.**  
*Far too many churches over-compensate for the weakness of the previous pastor by looking for pastoral personalities that are opposite the departed pastor.*
- 18. Holding Secret Meetings**  
*Operating in a covert manner only increases any spirit of cynicism, mistrust and doubt.*
- 19. No Clear Plan for Congregational Communication – Lack of Communication**  
*Staff and congregation must be kept in the loop by the elders and the search committee. Regular updates are essential.*
- 20. Hiring a New Pastor too quickly**  
*It is a major mistake to hire a pastor without digging deep. There must be serious assessment before any decisions are made. Judging by appearance and one candidating sermon alone will turn the pastoral search into a beauty pageant.*
- 21. Failure of the Elders and Staff to Rise to an Appropriate Transition Leadership Level**  
*A Pastoral transition will result in everyone needing to ‘step up their game’. This is a season – which must be recognized once the work is done.*
- 22. Failure to Celebrate!!**  
*Celebrate a job well done. Many will give sacrificially during a pastoral transition. Honor these people for their work.*