

## Pastors Engaging the Future in Their Senior Years

It is argued that pastors don't really retire and to a large extent that is true. They may not continue to be engaged in vocation ministry employment; however, they are and will be pastors for as long as they live. "In the final season of life, we are in a position to have the greatest influence if we don't grow weary. But if we live as spiritual orphans, afraid of change, slothful and isolated from the world, we may fill up the crevices of our remaining time in idle (and idol) pursuits. ... May our last years be as one missionary [the late Elizabeth Elliot] called her 'soldiership years'!" ("A Vision for the Aging Church" by James M. Houston and Michael Parker)

It is FEB Central's hope that pastors will capture these years with renewed energy and vision. The opportunity can be invigorating to "re-envision" and "retread" for a fulfilling and productive life and ministry in one's senior years.

This document will outline 3 phases of retirement to assist the pastor who (1) is entering his senior years (e.g. 55+), (2) is planning to conclude his final pastorate, or (3) is now entered into life beyond his final pastorate.

Please know that there is help available to assist the pastor on this journey. In fact, coaches, who have successfully transitioned into and journeyed in their senior years, are available to come alongside you. Please be wise and avail yourself of this opportunity. FEB Central can assist you.

This document divides a pastor's senior years into 3 phases as follows:

- **Phase 1: *Heading into Senior Years (55+)***
  - To help pastors envision what life can be in their senior years
- **Phase 2: *Anticipating Life beyond the Pastorate***
  - To help pastors finish strong and leave well
- **Phase 3: *Moving into Life beyond the Pastorate***
  - To help pastors enjoy their senior years

## **Phase 1: Heading into Senior Years (55+)**

To help pastors envision what life can be in their senior years

As pastors head into the early years of their senior years (55+), it is most advisable to take an honest (and what might be a gut-wrenching) look into the future in anticipation of what God may have in store beyond one's last pastorate and to prepare to maximize the remaining years of full-time pastoring. The following are some areas that need careful consideration and action.

### **IDENTIFYING NEEDS**

#### **1. The Need to Assess**

##### **a. Your Energy Level**

##### **b. Your Health**

##### **c. Your Financial Situation**

#### **2. The Need to Decide**

##### **a. Fellowship's Health and Dental Program**

### **TAKING ACTION**

- Determine your physical, mental and emotional ability to carry on in ministry.
- Stay fit with a regular physical exercise program.
- Have regular physical check-up's as frequently as recommended by your doctor. Listen to your doctor.
- Take advantage of FEB Central's financial planning seminars/workshops. (Note: FEB Central is partnered with personnel from the National Fellowship to make help available.)
- Analyze your finances and pension portfolio to have a good grip on your financial ability.
- Seek the help of a financial advisor. FEB Central may be able to direct you to one.
- Contact the Fellowship's Group Benefit Administrator at 519-821-4830 Ext 229 to obtain a copy of the Fellowship's plan for pastors in their senior years.
- Decide if you will remain in the Fellowship's program, if you need to investigate other health plans for costs and benefits, or if you will choose to not have a plan.

**b. Location/Relocation**

- Ask FEB Central for a coach.
- Begin to give consideration as to whether it will be advisable to remain in the same community or if you should geographically relocate? If you should favour remaining in the community, will it be advisable to stay in the church? Please seek counsel.

**3. The Need to Finish Strong**

**a. Bringing Your Time to an End**

- Determine when your pastoral days should end. You need to be the one to make the right decision as others should not be placed in that position.
- Plan strategically to end strong.

**b. Assessing What Can be Accomplished**

- Evaluate wisely what you feel you can accomplish.

**c. Listing Things You Want Accomplished**

- Develop a list of what needs to be accomplished. The list should include both strategies and a timeline.

**d. Deciding If Succession Is Applicable**

- Ask FEB Central for a coach as this decision needs wise counsel. Succession is not a 'one-size-fits-all' scenario. Only rare circumstances merit succession.

**4. The Need to Prepare**

In your early senior years, it will be pre-mature to discuss your future with the church's leadership and the church. However, you can begin to strategize and be prepared to minister in the coming years in a way that will equip the church's leadership. Please note that you don't have to re-invent the wheel. FEB Central staff has journeyed with numerous pastors and churches and have a wealth of experience. Please seek their counsel.

**a. Preparing the Elders/Deacons**

- Seek the counsel of FEB Central staff.

**b. Preparing Leaders for the Interim Period**

- Seek the counsel of FEB Central staff.

**c. Preparing the Congregation**

- Seek the counsel of FEB Central staff.

**5. The Need to Envision What May Be Ahead**

**a. Arranging Necessary Equipping**

- Get equipping for what you sense God is leading you to do in the future (e.g. ministry opportunities including intentional interim ministry, chaplaincy, teaching English as a second language [ESL], etc.)
- Seek the counsel of FEB Central staff.

**6. The Need to Honour**

**a. The Church**

- Continue to treat the church with a sanctified dignity.
- Celebrate what God is permitting you to do together.

**b. Your Wife**

- Do not fail to engage your wife as you conclude your pastorate and plan for the future.
- Listen to her well. Let her speak well into your future together. She has served alongside you and sacrificed for many years.
- Honour her in all your decisions.

**7. The Need to Inform**

**a. The Elders/Deacons**

- Seek the counsel of FEB Central staff as to when and how the Elders/Deacons should be informed.

**b. The Church**

- Seek the counsel of FEB Central staff as to when and how the congregation should be informed.

## **Phase 2: Anticipating Life Beyond the Pastorate:**

**To help pastors finish strong and leave well**

As pastors move closer to the conclusion of their last pastorate, a more definitive plan needs to be implemented. It is important that counsel be sought from the leadership of FEB Central. It is time to move beyond simply planning for the future and to make some necessary decisions. The following are some areas of their lives that need careful consideration and action.

### **1. Check List:**

You have been considering next moves for some time. It's now time for some final decisions.

#### **a. Staying, leaving, and relocating**

- Make sure you seek the counsel of FEB Central staff.
- Decide if you will stay in the community or relocate?
- Seek counsel as to whether it is advisable to stay in the community. However, if you stay in the community whether it is advisable to stay at the church or if you should find a new church to attend? It can't be emphasized enough that these are decisions with major consequences if not decided correctly. Do seek counsel!

#### **b. Health and Dental Program**

- Decide if you will stay in the Fellowship's plan, move to another plan or have no plan.

#### **c. Finances**

- Decide how and when you will use your pension funds?
- Consider applying for the pension/funds applicable to you through the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) unless you choose to delay in keeping with [CRA guidelines](#).

### **2. Vision for the church**

- Guide the church toward establishing a fresh, strategic, missional plan for the future.

**3. Know when it's time to leave**

- Circle the date on your calendar when your full-time pastoral days should end. You need to be the one to make the right decision as others should not be placed in that position.
- Plan strategically to end strong.

**4. Empty Your Church Office**

- Clean out your church office before your final day.

**5. Leave and let go**

- Leave the ministry in the hands of others. You have equipped them. Trust them! You are no longer "in charge".
- Relax and be at peace.

**6. Transitioning into retirement**

- Clarify your plan as to what will come next.
- Be willing to take that necessary step of faith into what may be many unknowns.
- Embrace the future with a renewed confidence in the sovereign purposes of God.

**7. Honour Your wife**

- Make sure that your plans for the future have "the seal of approval" of your wife.

## **Phase 3: Moving into Life Beyond the Pastorate**

To help pastors enjoy their senior years

Well, it has arrived – life beyond the full-time pastorate. And you are landing well. So here are some thoughts.

### **1. Honour Your wife**

- Your foremost responsibility is to honour your wife! May these years be some of the most joyful and fruitful for her! She deserves it!

### **2. Take a vacation**

- Enjoy a well-deserved vacation.

### **3. Get involved in doing things that you enjoy**

- It's a time for...
  - new and rewarding ministries
  - hobbies
  - community involvement
  - the new and even the unexpected
  - keeping your body and mind active
  - etc.!

### **4. Fellowship with other pastors**

- Continue to have regular contact with other pastors in your community and FEB Central associations.

### **5. Be a cheerleader for younger pastors**

- Cheer on the younger pastors. They represent a different generation and may do ministry in a way we didn't. But they love the Lord and preach the Word.
- Be an encourager! And cheer hard!

## Suggested Resources

### Peer Reviewed Books

**Pastors in Transition: Navigating the Turbulence of Change** by Glenn C. Taylor (Word Alive Press 2013). (Reviewed by Colin McKenzie)

“This book identifies the challenges for pastors, missionaries, their family members and the recipients of ministry. It explores helpful responses which can change the challenge and the pain into an experience of growth. We often cannot change the past experience, but we can create the future we desire and which God desires for us by careful and prayerful openness to the Spirit of God and our community of faith. Change may be an opportunity for growth, development, revision of philosophy of ministry through becoming vulnerable to the ministry of the Spirit and others of faith. It can be much more than an experience of loss and grief.” (From the back cover)

Glenn Taylor is an author who has pastored in the Fellowship, worked as a correctional chaplain, and as a counselor to mission organizations. He also worked in several other contexts. He is sharing from what he has experienced. The book is descriptive and prescriptive. I found it helpful as I was approaching retirement. Chapter 9, The Care & Maintenance of Pastors is very insightful and provides sources of pastoral care.

**Launch Your Encore: Finding Adventure and Purpose Later in Life** by Hans Finzel & Rick Hicks (Baker Books, 2015).

Rick Hicks was the President of Operation Mobilization for a number of years

Hans Finzel was the President of WorldVenture

The first 29 pages of the book “Launch Your Encore” are available at the link attached: [Finzel-Hicks LaunchEncore LS wo \(bakerpublishinggroup.com\)](https://www.bakerpublishinggroup.com/Finzel-Hicks-LaunchEncore-LS-wo)

**Aging: Growing Old in Church** by Will Willimon (Baker Books, 2020). (Reviewed by Mark Cuthbert)

Seasoned pastor and church leader Will Willimon excels at creating thought-provoking, accessible books for working pastors and seminarians. In *Aging*, Willimon takes a theologically rich look at numerous aspects of growing old.

Drawing on Scripture, literature, current research, and his experiences as an aging adult, Willimon reflects on aging as a spiritual journey. He explores the challenging realities as well as the rewarding joys of growing old and shows pastors how to help their congregants grow old gracefully and in good Christian hope. Willimon also offers practical advice on helping church members as they encounter retirement, aging, caring for the aging, loss, bereavement, and finding faith in the last quarter of life.



**A Vision for the Aging Church** by James M. Houston and Michael Parker (Intervarsity Press, 2011)  
(Reviewed by Mark Cuthbert)

Are we ready for the opportunities and challenges facing the aging church?

Now is the time for the church to offer ministry to its increasing numbers of seniors and to benefit from ministry they can offer. In this book James M. Houston and Michael Parker issue an urgent call to reconceive the place and part of the elderly and seniors in the local church congregation.

Confronting the idea that the aging are mostly a burden on the church, they boldly address the moral issues related to caring for them, provide examples of successful care-giving programs and challenge the church to restore broken connections across the generations.

Cowritten by a noted theologian and an expert in the fields of social work and gerontology, this interdisciplinary book assesses our current cultural context and the challenges and opportunities we face. The authors show us that seniors aren't the problem. They are the solution.

**Finishing Well: The Adventure of Life Beyond Halftime** by Bob P. Buford (Author), Ken Blanchard (Foreword)(Zondervan, 2011) (Reviewed by Mark Cuthbert)

Author Bob Buford called them "code breakers." They are people age 40 and older who have pioneered the art of finishing well in these modern times, and who can teach us to do the same, starting today. Buford sought out 60 of these trailblazers--including Peter Drucker, Roger Staubach, Jim Collins, Ken Blanchard, and Dallas Willard--and has recorded their lively conversations in these pages so that they can serve as "mentors in print" for all of us.

"Twenty years from now," Buford writes, "the rules for this second adulthood as a productive season of life may be better known. But for now, we're out across the frontier breaking new ground."

Buford gives you a chance to sit at the feet of these pioneers and learn the art of finishing well so you can shift into a far more fulfilling life now, no matter your age, and pursue a lasting significance that will be a legacy for future generations.

**The Encore Career Handbook** by Marci Alboher (New York: Workman, 2012). (Reviewed by Jack Flietstra)

This is a hands-on book for those seeking to move into an encore career/ministry. This book is full of illustrational stories of people who have moved into an encore career.

The book has helpful tools to guide you along the way of figuring out the 'what, where, when, how and why' of your encore career.

The chapters are independent of each other, so you can easily skip over some of the chapters and go to the ones that best apply to your situation.

**Next: Pastoral Succession That Works:** Vanderbloemen and William, Bird.

Packed with new research, new interviews, and practical solutions, this updated and expanded edition of *Next* will equip pastors, ministry teams, and Christian organizations to navigate leadership changes with wisdom and grace.

While there is no simple, one-size-fits-all solution to the puzzle of planning for a seamless pastoral succession, *Next* offers church leaders and pastors a guide to asking the right questions in order to plan for the future. Vanderbloemen, founder of a leading pastoral search firm, and Bird, an award-winning writer and researcher, share insider stories of succession failures and successes in dozens of churches, including

some of the nation's most influential. The authors demystify successful pastoral succession and help you prepare for an even brighter future for your ministry.

**Life Reimagined: Discovering Your New Life Possibilities** by Richard Leider and Alan Weber (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2013). (Reviewed by Colin McKenzie)

Life Reimagined is a secular book about six practices that help us work through changes and transitions in our lives. The Life Reimagined map consists of reflect, connect, explore, choose, repack, and act.

The authors observe that in the past, people worked in a limited number of career experiences and anticipated the pleasure of retirement and relaxation. However, a new pattern is emerging, where people transition through many career experiences. To do this effectively, we need to reimagine and understand the direction and choices involved. Whether we are approaching retirement or experiencing another type of transition, we need to make choices, and approach them with curiosity and courage.

Life Reimagined "...is a practical, pragmatic way to engage in life that allows anyone to take small steps toward exploring new possibilities." (From chapter 2)

Besides being helpful for pastors for themselves, it would be an excellent resource for pastors to use while coaching others.

**Social Forces and Aging** by Robert Atchley, Wadsworth Pub Co; 9th edition (Jan. 1 2000)

Atchley's interdisciplinary approach provides the concepts, information, insight, and examples needed to achieve a basic understanding of aging as a social process.

Social Forces and Aging outlines 6 stages of retirement:

- Stage 1 -- Imagination or Planning Stage  
This usually happens six to 15 years before completing his final pastorate. This is a time to invest a) financially and b) with time by thinking, pondering and dreaming about the next stage.
- Stage 2 – Hesitation Stage  
During this second stage (about three to five years before retirement), the person starts to see retirement as unavoidable, and feelings of apprehension may start to creep in. For some this can be very stressful.
- Stage 3 – Anticipation Stage  
This stage, occurring up to two years before retirement, is characterized by the feeling of excitement. More than half the people in this stage are being helped by a financial advisor.
- Stage 4 – Realization Stage  
Welcome to retirement day and the first year following it.
- Stage 5 – Reorientation Stage  
This could last anywhere from year 2 to year 15 after retirement when the person begins to look for a "new identity". Goals and expectations of life become adjusted to fit a new reality.
- Stage 6 – Reconciliation  
The Reconciliation stage usually happens 16 or more years after retirement.

## **Suggested Websites**

<https://factsandtrends.net/2017/03/09/how-old-are-americas-pastors/>

Although this document gives American statistics, the numbers would likely be similar in Canada.

[www.carp.ca](http://www.carp.ca)

This is the Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) website which contains some helpful tips.

<https://www.discprofile.com/>

This is about the D.I.S.C. profile test.

[www.encore.org](http://www.encore.org)

Encore elevates innovators and ideas that bring generations together. Encore accelerates intergenerational solutions to pressing social problems, from literacy to loneliness, and uncovers new ways to bring age diversity to schools, workplaces, communities and social movements.

[www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp](http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp)

A free personality test is available based on Carl Jung and Isabel Briggs Myers' personality type theory.

[www.lifereimagined.org](http://www.lifereimagined.org)

This takes you to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) website which contains some helpful tips.

[www.strengthsfinder.com/home.aspx](http://www.strengthsfinder.com/home.aspx)

The CliftonStrengths themes are your talent DNA. They explain the ways you most naturally think, feel and behave.

## **Government websites**

CRA guidelines: Information on the Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security pension and related benefits, the Canadian retirement income calculator and retirement planning.

The Government of Canada CPP retirement Pension Overview, with links to apply, other helps etc.

Government of Canada Old Age Security application and information

## **Books (Not Yet Peer Reviewed)**

Age Power: How the 21st Century Will Be Ruled by the New Old. Ken Dychtwald (New York: Tarcher, 2000).

The Grief Recovery Handbook, 20th anniversary edition. John W. James and Russell Friedman (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009).

Necessary Endings: The Employees, Businesses, and Relationships That All of Us Have to Give Up in Order to Move Forward. Henry Cloud (New York: HarperCollins, 2011).

The Retirement Maze: What You Should Know Before and After You Retire. Rob Pascale, Louis H. Primavera, and Rip Roach (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

Second-Act Careers: 50+ Ways to Profit from Your Passions During Semi-Retirement. Nancy Collamer (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2013).

StrengthsFinder 2.0. Tom Rath (New York: Gallup Press, 2007).

Transitions: Making Sense out of Life's Changes, second edition. William Bridges (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2004).

Working Identity: Unconventional Strategies for Reinventing Your Career. Herminia Ibarra (Watertown, MA: Harvard Business Review, 2004).