

## Blessing Service/Commitment Sunday

The need for a church to leave behind their bond to a former pastor and freely “cleave” to the new pastor is similar to the requirement for marriage given in Genesis 2:24. Transition specialist Joseph Umidi writes, “Saying farewell, accomplishing good closure, and praying for the blessing of a commission in a corporate prayer time are important to your church members and the departing leader. Well-managed closure prepares the congregation for beginning the new courtship process and helps them remain open to receiving and accepting the unique ministry of the new leader.”<sup>37</sup> The following can be used as a guide for an informal blessing service. The service can take place informally in a room of the church or publicly as part of a church service, generally at the very end.

This final service is also a great time to encourage the church body to remain committed during the transition. Members can be asked to sign the Church Member Commitment. The commitment time can be done earlier in the service. The blessing service below takes place near the end of the church service.

### Board and Pastor’s Blessing Service

**READING BY BOARD MEMBER:** Scripture gives us several examples of believers blessing each other when the circumstances of life caused them to part ways.

- Before his death, the last thing **Moses** did was to pronounce a blessing on each of the tribes of Israel (Deuteronomy 33:1-29).
- While concluding his farewell speech to the children of Israel, the prophet **Samuel** encouraged them in the Lord and said, *As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you* (1 Samuel 12:23 NIV).
- The Bible tells us that before ascending to heaven, **Jesus** blessed the disciples: *When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven* (Luke 24:50-51 NIV).
- After recognizing a new assignment for Barnabas and Paul, the **church at Antioch** laid hands on them and sent them off with prayer (Acts 13:1-3).
- While saying goodbye to the Ephesian elders, **Paul** spoke blessings upon them, and they knelt to pray and cry together (Acts 20:32-36).
- Many of Paul’s epistles conclude with a prayer or blessing for the recipients.

**READING BY OUTGOING PASTOR:** A blessing is the act of declaring favor and goodness upon others. A blessing was one way of asking for God’s divine favor to rest upon others. Probably the most famous blessing in the Bible is found in Numbers 6:22-27.

*Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron and his sons to bless the people of Israel with this special blessing: ‘May the LORD bless you and protect you. May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.’ Whenever Aaron and his sons bless the people of Israel in my name, I myself will bless them”* (NLT).

God told Moses to teach Aaron’s sons to bless others and, in return, God would bless them. There are five things this blessing asks God to do in the life of another:

- God to give His favor and protection – *“May the LORD bless and protect you” (v.24)*
- God to be pleased – *“May the LORD smile on you” (v.25)*
- God to be merciful and compassionate – *“May the LORD be gracious to you” (v.25)*
- God to give His approval – *“May the LORD show you his favor” (v.26)*
- God to give peace – *“May the LORD... give you his peace” (v.26)*

**LAYING ON OF HANDS – BOARD PRAYS:** The board lays hands on the pastor and family and prays for them.

**PASTOR’S PRAYER & BLESSING**

The outgoing pastor then leads the church in prayer for the board and the church and concludes with the following blessing:

I want to pray a blessing over you today. "May the Lord bless you and keep you; may He smile on you and be gracious to you; may He look your way and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)