

# Leaving well during a pandemic requires the careful passing of the digital keys

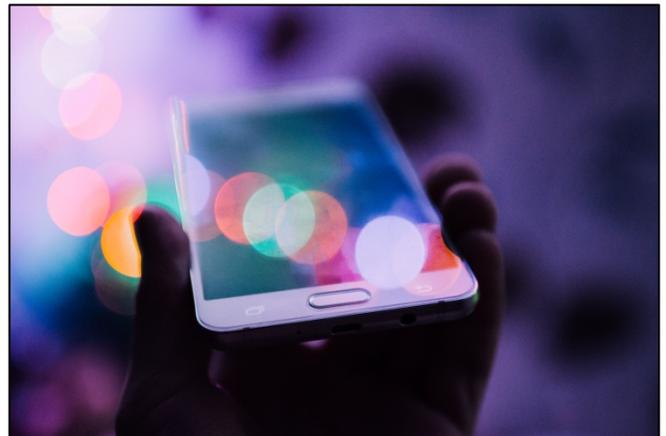
By Kristen Caldwell & Patrick Scriven

A smooth transition of digital resources between pastors has become even more crucial during a pandemic. As you prepare to leave your current appointment, it's important to plan for the digital transfer of the various ways you communicate with members and the larger community.

It is quite possible your church's administrative assistant or one of your volunteers within the church has access to your church's 'digital keys,' but the clergy or pastor should have administrative privileges as well, in case there are any changes to staffing or volunteer support. So even if you haven't been personally responsible for the church's digital presence, consider how you can proactively connect the incoming pastor to the following information.

Here are some things to consider:

- **Pastoral Email:** Do you have a general church email address? Who has access to it? If the current pastor is receiving clergy-care related emails that the new pastor needs to receive, what system will you work out to make sure that information is passed along?
- **Website:** Having a working website that, at a minimum, tells people where your church is located, who the pastor is, worship times and a link to online worship services is critical. There are many affordable platforms out there that can be used. If you are transitioning to a local church without a web presence, contact your conference communicator for some options.
  - What you need to share:
    - Contact info for people who have access/responsibility for updating the website
    - Hosting information and administrative login credentials
    - Domain registration information and administrative login credentials
    - Administrative access to the website (if different than above)
- **Social media:** For many, social media is people's first news source. Consistency with your posting and management of the accounts is critical to successful usage.
  - What you need to share:
    - Make sure you share username and passwords for active and dormant accounts like Twitter and Instagram



- Pass administrative privileges for the Facebook page to the incoming pastor and work out a time with them to remove your access (if you have any)
    - Contact info for people who have access/responsibility for updating the social media accounts
  - Incoming pastors should take some time to understand how the church's social media channels are currently utilized. Understanding what people currently appreciate will be helpful before trying new approaches.
  - Outgoing pastors should be particularly careful when using their personal social media accounts during the transition with former parishioners. Take advantage of available tools to minimize the chance your social posts will keep appearing on their social feeds.
  - **Streaming Platforms:** Does your church have a video streaming platform apart from Facebook where you post worship services (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.)?
    - Share usernames and passwords or transfer access to the incoming pastor (or another responsible person if that is their preference)
    - If the service has billing, please note this and share renewal information
  - **Zoom:** In many local churches, Zoom has become an incredibly important platform during this pandemic for church meetings and the ability to check-in with individuals within the congregation.
    - Outgoing pastors should transfer access to the Zoom account to the incoming pastor (unless managed by another continuing staff/volunteer). Visit the Zoom.us website to change the email associated to the account if connected to your personal email.
    - Share briefly in writing the current practices, if any, of the church on Zoom. What meetings occur? Is it used for worship or pastoral care?
    - Incoming pastors new to Zoom should take some time to understand how the platform works as this may be a key tool for meeting new members. First impressions still matter even in a pandemic.
  - **Equipment:** Many churches have a lot of digital equipment to record sermons or share music. Make sure you take inventory of those resources that the pastor may use that belong to the church. If you have church gear currently at your home for recording, make a plan to return it to the church before you begin your new appointment.
  - **Direct Communication:** Take time to list the other, direct communication channels you have been using with the church.
    - Include printed materials (newsletter, regular postcards, etc.) and frequency
    - Using an email newsletter platform? Share login credentials and frequency.
    - Share other tools like phone trees and text-alert systems and access keys.
  - **Online giving:** If your church has an online, or electronic giving platform, great! If your church doesn't have one set up, consider starting that conversation now so the incoming pastor has one less change to make as they arrive.
    - Share how the incoming pastor can access giving information (both online and offline)
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- If online giving isn't available yet, review this resource for examples and contact your Conference Treasurer if you need help! <https://greaternw.org/electronic-giving-allows-ministry-to-continue-in-isolating-times/>

Leaving well is a delicate process of saying goodbye and closing pastoral doors so they might be opened more easily to the colleague who follows you. In normal times this can be difficult, but it is often aided by the reality that you have moved to a new community. Now, when physical presence has been removed from the equation, the transition from one pastor to the next requires even more care.

Your work handing off the 'digital keys' of the church, stepping back from online interaction with members of the church you are leaving, and clearly and pastorally creating healthy boundaries are gifts to the pastor who will follow you. Gathering this information can also be a small blessing to the church you are leaving as you reflect on, organize and audit some of what you are leaving behind.

If you have questions about the information mentioned above, please don't hesitate to reach out to your Conference Communicator.

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