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Article: [Pastoral Excellence](#)

## Opportunity amid vulnerability

*A classic book on pastoral transitions offers guidance on how to navigate change.*

by [Bob Wells](#)

June 9, 2009

In 1987, the Rev. Loren Mead, founder of the Alban Institute, wrote a guidebook on pastoral transition called “Critical Moment of Ministry: Change of Pastors.”

The book, revised in 2005 and renamed “[A Change of Pastors . . . And How It Affects Change in the Congregation.](#)” still is regarded by many experts as the leading work on helping congregations through a complicated time.

Mead summed up pastoral transition as a period of great opportunity and great vulnerability, offering guidelines and suggestions for taking advantage of a change in leadership.

Among other advice, Mead outlines five developmental tasks for congregations to undertake in the critical moment of pastoral transition:

- **Coming to terms with history.** Look at the congregation’s history, accomplishments, high and low points and how it got where it is today.
- **Discovering a new identity.** Reexamine the congregation’s mission, core values and vision.
- **Allowing needed leadership change.** Examine how lay leadership is practiced in the church and learn how to tap into both new and old lay leadership.
- **Renewing denominational linkages.** How does the congregation relate to the wider church, the denomination and other churches and ministries in the community?
- **Commitment to new directions in ministry.** Develop a plan for the future by building readiness for and commitment to new directions under a new pastor.

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#### [Making transitions »](#)

A change of leadership can be difficult. Congregations, pastors and

denominational leaders have to work hard to effect smooth pastoral leadership transitions.

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