

Guidelines for Ministry and Church Establishment Rotations

Supporting churches until they are established with ministry rotations is coordinated by the Church Establishment Committee, part of Apostolic Christian HarvestCall. Historically, this has been a rotation centered around the need for pulpit ministers. Going forward, the desire is to shift the focus to broader than just the pulpit ministry and inclusive of various gifts from within the larger sending church. The purpose of the rotation/relationship is to “support the small church’s efforts of evangelism, discipleship, and establishment of the church”. To facilitate this purpose, we are offering some recommendations to both those providing the ministry support and the receiving congregation.

Key Elements for Both Sending and Receiving Churches

- 1) **Prayer:** This involves a need for the “Lord of the harvest” to send laborers into areas in which the harvest is white but the laborers are few (Matt 9:38, Luke 10:2).
- 2) **Solid Communications:** Clear, proactive, and timely communications are essential to have time for planning and alignment of the right team.
- 3) **Commitment:** The greater the commitment by many in the sending churches, the more likely that scheduled rotations will be kept (or traded), long term relationships will form, and demonstration of greater faithfulness in serving along with the small church (2 Cor. 8:16).
- 4) **Transparency of Need:** The more the smaller church understands their needs and local opportunities and shares those with sending churches, the more likely the larger churches will be able to identify resources that could be helpful (2 Cor. 8).
- 5) **Servant Hearts:** The more the sending church is willing to invest time, seek out brethren to send which have gifts helpful to the specific needs of the receiving church, and share resources for the gospel alongside the that church, the more likely needs of the receiving church can be met. (Titus 1:1, James 1:1, 2 Peter 1:1, Jude 1:1, Rev. 1:1)
- 6) **Humility:** It takes humility for the receiving church to ask for help, and it takes humility for the sending churches to serve underneath the leadership and direction of the receiving church. The local church has the vision, and the sending church is helping them take steps to realize it (1 Peter 5:5).

Guidelines to Consider in Communication

- **Communicate Early** – Visiting ministers are encouraged to call at least 3-4 weeks before the scheduled service to verify dates and to begin determining how to best serve the church and who all might travel for the rotation to accomplish that. If you are flying, it is important to call before you purchase the tickets. In addition to identifying local opportunities to serve beyond the pulpit ministry, there are a number of logistical topics to review. Examples include: accommodations, fellowship during the weekend, special events at the receiving congregation, numbers planning to attend from the visiting church, etc. Both the sending and receiving churches should be open and flexible concerning needs and expectations to prevent miscommunication.

- **Trading with another church** – If the sending church trades their scheduled date of service with another church, make sure the receiving church is notified as soon as possible of the trade. Please firm up trades at least a month prior to your scheduled date as it allows the trading church time to make their plans with the receiving.
- **Visits outside of rotation** – Visits outside of the rotation system are encouraged but also need to be communicated. If your plans lead you to a small church at a time other than a scheduled rotation, please call ahead and let them and the church that is scheduled for rotation know of your plans at the earliest possible date. Sometimes, the sending church that is on the schedule is having difficulty finding a church to trade with them or is forfeiting a special home church occasion (e.g., baptisms, wedding, etc.) and would appreciate a proposed trade. At other times, the advanced notice to the small church of your travel plans might help with fulfilling additional ministry opportunities.
- **Lodging** – At times, the same families host many weekends in a row and would appreciate a break. In other instances, they are desirous of fellowship that hosting guests affords and/or feel that hosting is a way they can give back to those coming. When communicating with the host church, it is important to be flexible when determining accommodations (e.g., hotel vs. home).

Practical Suggestions for Serving

- **Rotating Ministers or Relationship Development** – Some receiving churches may enjoy our historical approach of sending different ministers with each rotation to provide a “variety”, and some appreciate having the same brothers come each year or even multiple times a year. Sending ministers may enjoy travelling to different locations throughout the year which provides variety, and some ministers are more available for travel than others creating repetition. As we seek to establish the receiving churches, open communication will help form a common understanding with each sending church in regards to which combination of the above options are preferred. It’s also helpful if receiving churches understand that not all sending churches are able to accommodate the ideal.
- **Ideas for Service** – This is written for consideration by the sending church and is intended to be a starter list to help spark creativity and a prayerful sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. The sending church should feel free to request something similar from the receiving church.
 1. Create a group from your church to accompany your minister to the same location repeatedly. This can be the same minister each time or, if that doesn’t work, the same group with different ministers. Either way it will be a boost to the receiving church.
 2. Offer to provide and serve church lunch for your Sunday.
 3. Offer to help with maintenance, church cleaning, or a special project on Saturday, include brethren with the skills needed, and ask if you need to bring supplies also.
 4. Join them for a singing or fellowship on Saturday evening and provide the snacks.
 5. If you have done a topical presentation recently, inquire if there would be interest for that on Saturday evening or Sunday afternoon, depending on local practices, or perhaps if there is a topic they would like to have you cover.
 6. Inquire if there are any brethren, converts, or unbelievers that have unique needs that might benefit from someone with the same struggle or history coming along. Examples

may be someone that has been rejected by parents for their decision to repent, someone who has never read a Bible, or someone that has an addiction issue.

7. Ask if there are singles that would enjoy additional fellowship or younger couples who would enjoy a date night if someone came to watch their kids.
8. If you don't know the church well, ask if they can share an overview of their congregation or local outreach/discipleship efforts either in advance or while you are there. Find out if there are places to visit to better understand the area or enjoy the same things that they enjoy.
9. Inquire if there are ways you could support the receiving church between your visits.
10. Keep your focus on serving to meet their needs.

Attitudes Toward Service

- **When there is only one home minister, Sunday school teacher, song leader, etc.** – It is helpful for sending churches to be sensitive to the fact that the brethren in small churches preach/teach/lead very often and to offer a break. The smaller churches are encouraged to proactively share when a break would be helpful. This can be useful both when brethren from larger churches are visiting the smaller church and vice versa.
- **Perspective on size and trajectory** – It is often apparent when visiting a small church what is lacking or missing or how small they are, so unless it is part of a dialog on how you might help address it, it can be discouraging to point out the obvious. Even well-meaning phrases like “Jesus left the ninety and nine” or “where two or three are gathered” can feel negative or as salt in a wound. Rather, being observant of the strengths of the small church, affirming them while you are there, and sharing this when returning home can be helpful in building on the gifts and resources that are present.

Clearly when the sending church, and especially the visiting minister, views the ministry rotation as an opportunity to serve God and his children, all are blessed. When the receiving church makes their requests known and is gracious for those that come to serve, it is a blessing to serve. The more that we collectively embrace the ministry rotation as primarily a mission versus a vacation, though both might be included, the more likely we'll see the ways to serve. We trust God to be glorified and add his increase to the collective labors in sharing the word and establishing his church! (Romans 10:15)

The work has truly been blessed in the past, and yet there continues to be much work to do. *“Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”* Matt 9:37-38.

May God grant each one the grace to continue this work of nurturing and providing for our churches that need ministerial support to proclaim good news to the lost, feed the flock, and establish the church. (1 Cor. 12:28, 1 Peter 5:2)