

ADVICE FROM TRANSITION MINISTERS TO FEMALE CLERGY

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How can female clergy prepare themselves for positions of leadership? We sought suggestions from transition ministers throughout the Episcopal Church.

- Focus on leadership competency and get some additional preparation in congregational development above and beyond what seminaries provide. Learn how to lead an organization with skill and strategic planning. Ditch the naïve assumption that all you need to do is preach the Gospel and love Jesus.
- That said, work with a spiritual director who can help you dis-identify with the parameters of “success” traditionally associated with the institutional church (size, ASA, budget, etc.) and who can help you keep your eyes on growth in faith, hope, and love for you and for the people among whom you serve.
- Make your personal practices of prayer, exercise, and self-care your top priority. Do not buy into the institutional fiction that says loving Jesus means overworking and not taking care of yourself.
- Recognize that the church is a highly political institution. Learn to think politically and strategically in the manner of being "wise as a serpent but innocent as a dove." Jesus said that, not me.

-- the Rev. Barbara Price, Diocese of Western New York

- Be ready to negotiate salary and benefits. Don't just accept an offer without getting what you need (apparently women are less likely to do this).
- Have a five-year plan in mind about what kind of ministry you want to do. Even if you are not sure what you want, it helps you advance if you are thinking ahead.
- Think about the experience you want to gain in order to increase your gifts for ministry. Don't stay in a position simply because it is good for the people you serve.
- It takes time to find a new position; plan ahead.
- Talk to others about what gifts they perceive you have and ask how they think you might hone your skills.

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- Make connections, make connections, make connections.
- Build good relationships with people who have power and/or authority.
- Know how the system works in your diocese and use it wisely.
- Do your research when interviewing. Know the details of the position, what the salary and benefit scale is for that diocese, the history of the leadership.
- Look and act professionally.
- Expect a place at the table.
- You will have to be twice as good as the men to get the same positions; know this.

-- the Rev. Anne Kitch, Diocese of Bethlehem

- * If you are thinking that your ministry will be as a full-time associate in a large, affluent church, be prepared to stand in line. These positions are drying up as the church “right-sizes” in the 21st Century.
- * Many dioceses are sending the newly-ordained into positions as priests-in-charge of small congregations.
- * If the diocese has not already done this, find a woman mentor who has experience leading a large congregation as a rector.

-- The Rev. Canon Michael P. Durning, Diocese of Southwest Florida