CONCERT OF PRAYER

TIMES OF TRANSITION:
PASTOR CHANGE

(NOTE: In conducting this concert of prayer, you might have one main presenter or several. One presenter for each main section might work well. Regardless, you will note that there are a number of opportunities for a variety of individuals to serve as presenter, give a testimony, lead in prayer, or lead in worship. We encourage you to read through the script and carefully consider who might fill each role.)

OPENING (15 Minutes)

➢ Welcome and Prayer
➢ Opening Worship
➢ Offering

(Optional) Explanation of the Concert of Prayer

PRESENTER: This service will be a bit out of the ordinary, as we celebrate a concert of prayer. Concerts of prayer can involve a variety of elements, including Scripture readings, songs, testimonies, and, of course, prayer. As an interactive worship service, we will all have opportunity to share in unison Scripture readings, songs, and prayers. Various people, pastors and laypeople alike, can lead segments of the concert.

Our purpose in this concert of prayer is to focus our thoughts and prayers on the coming days, as our church prepares to welcome a new pastor to the congregation. And so, as we worship our Savior for the incredible things done in our midst in days past, we look forward with trust and anticipation for His will to be done in guiding our future, for His glory.

SETTING THE STAGE (5 Minutes)

PRESENTER: We are the Church—the representation of Christ to our neighborhood and community, a congregation of believers who serve and worship the Lord as one body in the assurance that God has brought us together for a purpose that reaches far beyond the plans and concerns of this world.

The local church, like every believer who forms a part of it, exists for God’s purposes. We’re reminded of the promise God gave His people in Jeremiah 29:11-13, assuring them that their confidence would not disappoint if only they would surrender their plans to Him. Join me in this unison reading:
Unison Congregational Reading: “I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:11-13, NIV).

And so, we enter this time of prayer and intercession with the conviction that God has incredible plans for us as a church. Yet we’re also reminded that receiving this blessing demands a response on our part. He calls us to rely on Him, trust His way as best, and step out in faith, not bowing to the pressures of our own fears, or the tug of our own understandings and preferences.

1. We Rely on God (20 Minutes)

Presenter: The choice of a pastor is not to be taken lightly. This decision impacts us as a congregation and as individual believers—and also our neighborhood and community. It’s a decision requiring spiritual insight and understanding. As a result, we must not make this decision alone. We need the Lord’s wisdom and guidance. Let’s rejoice that He has promised to give us this very thing, if we’re willing to seek Him. Note the promise of James 1:5…

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5, NIV).

Presenter: God’s people have been putting this powerful principle into practice since Bible times. In the Book of Acts, the Early Church launched Paul’s first missionary journey in response to prayer. Join me in these responsive readings as they appear on the screen:

Congregational reading (alternate leader/women/men) [ppt]

[Leader] In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.

[Women] While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

[Men] So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3, NIV)

Presenter: And like the psalmist David, who turned to God for guidance in a time of spiritual crisis, we can turn to Him in a time of spiritual need:

Congregational reading (alternate unison/women/men) [ppt]

[Unison] To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; in you I trust, O my God.

[Women] Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

[Men] Remember, O Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old. (Psalm 25:1,2,4,5, NIV).
**Presenter:** God was faithful to guide in Bible times, just as He is faithful to guide today. At this time, ____________ is coming to share a testimony about a time when God provided direction at just the right time.

**Testimony:** (Have a member of the congregation share a strong personal account of God bringing guidance during a time when it was desperately needed.)

**Presenter:** As we prepare to go to the Lord in prayer for reliance on Him, and submission to His will, in this vital time, let’s spend some time in worship.

[ppt] **Worship Leader: Congregational Choruses** [congregation stand]; Song Suggestions: Blessed Be Your Name [Redman]; This Is the Air I Breathe; Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord; Change My Heart, Oh God; I Surrender All

**Prayer Leader #1:** (Suggestion: Pray that God will help us surrender the course of this process to His wisdom and direction. Affirm our reliance upon Him, along with a humble recognition that we at times can struggle to practice such reliance.)

**Prayer Leader #2:** (Suggestion: Pray that God will begin to work in the heart of the person who will be our next pastor, as well as that person’s family. Ask God to help them surrender their circumstances to Him as they prepare to deal with the call toward, and the realities of, transition.)

[ppt] 2. **We Commit to Unity of Heart and Purpose** (20 Minutes)

**Presenter:** (The presenter of this particular section should be a visible leader within the church, such as a board member.) In 1 Samuel 16, as Israel prepared to find a replacement for King Saul, Scripture identified a powerful human tendency at work in times of leadership change—as well as how it contrasts with God’s perspective. When Samuel made the assumption that Eliab would be the next king, the Lord corrected him in verse 7, which states:

[ppt] “The Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’”

As we embark on this journey, we will each bring our own expectations and preferences into the process of evaluating and choosing a pastor. Yet while we may form a personal opinion on whom the next pastor should be—even those based on very positive and valid perspectives—we must remember that God sees the whole picture. If we become fixated on our own expectations, those expectations will threaten to divide us. But if we will open our hearts to the leading of the Lord, recognizing His desire to lead this process, we will strengthen in unity because we will maintain a single purpose: finding and following God’s plans for this church. And so, as we go to prayer, we do well to remember the following requests:

(Prayer for the following requests can be offered by one prayer leader, by six separate leaders, or by inviting people in the congregation to lead out spontaneously. Each request occupies its own slide in the PowerPoint presentation.) [ppt]

- Let us pray that God gives us a clear and unified sense of His plans and purposes for the future of this church.
Let us pray that God sends us a leader gifted to meet the unique and diverse needs of the entire congregation.

Let us pray that God sends us a leader with a vision and passion for this community, and who is gifted to lead in ministry to this community.

Let us pray that God sends us a leader willing and gifted to utilize and nurture the many gifts represented in the men, women, youth, and children throughout this congregation.

Let us pray that God sends us a leader gifted in guiding the ongoing discipleship needs of this congregation.

Let us pray that God sends us a leader passionate about God, given to prayer, diligent in the study of the Word, and sensitive to the guidance and moving of the Holy Spirit.

**[ppt]** **WORSHIP LEADER: Congregational Choruses** [congregation stand]: Song Suggestions: We Fall Down; Bind Us Together; Sanctuary; Mighty To Save; Breathe

**PRESENTER:** Unity of heart and purpose has been foundational to a healthy, vital congregation since the beginnings of the Early Church. Let's examine Paul's instruction to the Colossians by reading together Colossians 3:12-17.

**CONGREGATIONAL READING** (Have a leader read verse 12, then alternate men and women, and conclude in unison.) **[ppt]**

**[LEADER]** As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

**[MEN]** Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

**[WOMEN]** And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

**[MEN]** Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

**[WOMEN]** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

**[UNISON]** And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:12-17, NIV)

**PRESENTER/PRAYER LEADER:** Let us pray together that God will keep us unified throughout the coming weeks and months as we choose a new pastor. May we exhibit the qualities promoted in these verses, and above all may our words, attitudes, and actions bear witness to the love of Christ that dwells within us.
(Pray that the congregation be clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience throughout the choosing process. Pray that differences of opinion not lead to division, but that unity and love would reign. Pray that God give fill each member of the congregation with wisdom, vision, self-control, and mutual respect in times of discussion. And, above all, pray that every word and action be worthy of having been done in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

[ppt] 3. WE STEP OUT IN FAITH, BELIEVING GOD FOR HIS GUIDANCE (20 MINUTES)

**PRESENTER:** We are likely quite familiar with Paul’s words of instruction on spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6—that we put on the full armor of God to stand firm in His plans for our lives. Yet we must not overlook how Paul ended that instruction in verses 18-20: [ppt]

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. (Ephesians 6:18-20, NIV)

Every battle, every challenge, and even every task we face as a congregation, must be immersed in prayer. Prayer brings the help, guidance, and power we need to move forward in this vital time of transition. Thus we close this service with a two-fold time of prayer. First we would like our leaders to come forward, joined by others who would like to lay hands on them as we seek the Lord's guidance, wisdom, and strength. (Have those who are on the board and/or the pastoral search committee come forward. If you church has pastoral staff, invite them to the front as well.)

**PRAYER LEADER #1:** (Pray that God will guide the leaders of the church through this time of change. Seek God’s wisdom to direct their decision-making processes; ask for His anointing to rest on them, that they work together in unity to discover God’s plans for the future. Ask God to bless their families during what may be busy days and weeks, as well as believing for good health in their bodies. Ask God that every meeting be directed by the Holy Spirit. Likewise, pray for God’s strength and anointing on church staff during a time of added responsibilities. May the ministries of the church continue to grow and flourish in the weeks and months to come. NOTE: A list of possible prayer emphases is contained in the PowerPoint presentation.) [ppt]

**PRESENTER:** In the same way, we need to pray for our entire congregation, that God will bless our involvement in the ministries of this church, guide our steps in the choosing process, and keep our congregation strong and faithful in giving and service throughout the transition process. I invite all of us to come forward now for a time of prayer as a congregation, seeking God on behalf of one another as well as this entire church body.

**PRAYER LEADER #2:** (Pray that God will help the ministries of the church to strengthen and flourish during this gap in senior pastoral leadership. Pray that attendance and giving in the church will stay strong. Ask God to help us recommit to the ministries where each of us serves, that none of the discipleship, fellowship, worship, and outreach efforts of this congregation will suffer or decline through the time of transition. Believe God for growth, with His help. Finally, pray that God keeps our eyes and hearts focused on Him throughout the coming weeks and months. NOTE: A list of possible prayer emphases is contained in the PowerPoint presentation.) [ppt]

[ppt] **WORSHIP LEADER:** Close the service by leading in a time of worship and prayer at the altar.