

# WHEN YOUR PREACHER LEAVES: Interim Services for Churches Between Ministers

October, 2008, #28



Jerrie Barber and John Parker



To subscribe to this newsletter: > [Subscribe page](#) .

---

In this newsletter:

Planning to Leave – Suggestions  
Mustard Seeds from Favorite Books  
Smile of the Month  
Jerrie and John this Month

---

## Planning to Leave – Suggestions by Jerrie Barber



Last month, [September 2008](#), I wrote that preachers are going to leave the congregation where they are now serving. They will do this in one of four ways:



1. Death.
2. Being terminated.
3. Resigning.
4. Second coming of Jesus.

It is my thinking that it is helpful for the preacher and the congregation to acknowledge this reality and plan for it. The best time to begin this process is when the preacher comes or earlier – during the interview process. When I was talking with the elders of Berry's Chapel during the fall and winter of 1992-1993, I told them that I wanted to do interim ministry in the future. Perhaps this made our relationship better and maybe this was my first interim although I was there fourteen years.

I did “pre-marital counseling” with one preacher and congregation a few years ago. We talked about how him leaving that congregation before he started working with

them. We discussed how they would treat his wife and children should he die during his time with them. I asked them how they would like to be informed should he decide to move to another work. I made suggestions and we discussed how to apply the golden rule in dismissing a preacher from his work. It is my observation that it is easier to discuss those topics when they have not happened. We lay a foundation of agreements that will be helpful when the change occurs.

The elders at Berry's Chapel and I discussed my leaving each year at my evaluation. "Are you still planning to do interim ministry?," they would ask. In the fall of 2003, they asked if I had a date in mind. They said my contract called for ninety days notice. They wanted more time than that. The elders assured me they were not trying to rush the event but simply wanted us to plan.

After coming up with a transition plan, we announced my leaving during a family meeting June 13, 2004. I was to finish my work the first Sunday of April 2007. In a later announcement, the elders said, "To our knowledge, in the 105 year history of this congregation, there has never been a planned transition. We would like to try it one time and see how it works."

From my perspective, this worked well. As we were approaching twenty months remaining, my wife and I decided that a visit with each family would be a good way to say good-bye. We started at the beginning and end of the directory and worked toward the middle. We visited 95% of the families in the congregation. These visits were in their homes, our homes, at restaurants, and at the church building. It was a good way to express appreciation for the time we enjoyed with that congregation, to talk about our departure, and the work we planned to do in the future.

During the last six months, I had a "workshop Sunday night" each month. I selected some of my favorite sermons – some that I had preached there before and some that I had not preached – and delivered them. I used some lessons that I had presented at workshops and special services at other congregations. Several people told me that I should have resigned earlier because I was preaching better after I announced my departure.

From time to time, I would mention what I would miss about this congregation and what the time with them had meant to me and my family. This is the time to express gratitude for time shared – not how great the next place is going to be.

The outgoing preacher should finish his work and see that necessary things are covered. It is good to see that the next preacher is provided with information that will help his ministry start well. I delivered a lesson on how to treat the new preachers. Wes Gallagher had recently begun working with the congregation. Andy Baker would be following me in the pulpit.

It is no credit to any preacher and his ministry for the work to go down and the congregation to dislike the next preacher. The leaving preacher can be helpful in preparing for the change.

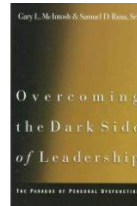
John the Baptist had the right idea for transition when he said, "He must increase, but I *must* decrease" (John 3:30). Jesus is a model for preparing for change: "From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day" (Matthew 16:21). Although it did not take away the hurt and confusion, when the

apostles worked through their disorientation and disappointment, they did what Jesus commanded and trained them to do – carry the gospel to the world.

---

*Mustard Seeds from Favorite Books, Jerrie Barber*

*Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership*, © 1997, 2008 by Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima.



But in February 2007, Lisa Nowak got into her car – which was loaded with a knife, latex gloves, a raft of emails between two fellow astronauts, and a BB gun – and drove nine hundred miles from Houston to Orlando, wearing an adult diaper, allegedly to assault a woman she perceived was trying to steal her love interest.

Upon word of her arrest and the charge of attempted murder, her parents reacted with shocked disbelief and told interviewers, “Considering both her personal and professional life, these alleged events are completely out of character and have come as a tremendous shock to our family.” Evidently there was another side to Lisa’s shining public persona: a darker side of which others, even her family, were unaware. But, as Jung said, “The brighter the persona, the darker the shadow” (pages 40, 41).

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born to Joseph P. and Rose Kennedy, the second of nine children. The Kennedy family provided young John with an environment in which his dark side would not only develop but also flourish and be encouraged. Clare Booth Luce, wife of the famous publishing magnate Henry Luce, once described the Kennedy family as one in which there was “ambition and pride and human wreckage, such dedication to the best and lapses into the mire of life; such vulgar, noble, driven, generous, self-centered, loving suspicious, devious, honorable, vulnerable, indomitable people” (page 72).

For many leaders, entrepreneurs, and successful businesspeople, the dark side has provided the fuel for achievement necessary to set them apart. Though often it can be a painful and debilitating force in our lives, our dark side can also serve as a silent internal mentor, tirelessly coaching us to triumph in the same areas of our lives that helped create it. In virtually every field of endeavor, leaders have knowingly and unknowingly ridden the wave of their dark side of astounding success (page 85).

A common manifestation among codependent spiritual leaders is their failure to confront and deal with inappropriate behaviors within the church. Even when a behavior is clearly unacceptable, the codependent leader can be terrified to address the situation for fear of hurting someone’s feelings and risking the loss of approval that might come with such a confrontation. The natural result of such avoidance is the enabling of unhealthy and even unbiblical behaviors within the church (page 136).

Some signs of a codependent leader include the following: Codependent leaders are peacemakers who cover up problems, rather than face them, in an effort to balance

the group system. They may be very benevolent with a high tolerance for deviant behavior. Willing to take on more work so they do not have to tell anyone no, they react rather than act (page 137).

For example, Lincoln made it a practice never to display his anger in public. Instead he would express himself in a lengthy letter to the offending party. He would then hang on to the letter and read it periodically until the anger subsided, finally disposing of it, having never mailed it. It was in this way that he could vent his feelings without giving needless offense to others, which would create barriers to his leadership (page 151).

---

## Smile of the Month

The milk shake machine at the fast-food restaurant I manage was broken, so I had an assistant post a sign to that effect on the drive-through speaker. A short time later, a customer pulled up to the speaker.



“May I take your order?” I asked.

Crash, boom, bang! came the response. I asked the customer to pull around.

“Were you pounding on the speaker?” I asked the driver.

Yes, I was,” she admitted.

“Why would you do that?”

“Because the sign on the speaker said:

‘SHAKE

MACHINE

BROKEN” - Deb Sipe, “All in a Day’s Work” (*Readers Digest*, February 2004, page 73).

---

## Barber Clippings

I started October 1 with Hendersonville. I am enjoying getting to know the staff and elders there. Keith Parker and I preached together October 5. We talked about planning for change. Jesus began preparing His disciples for His death and a new relationship with them at Caesarea Philippi. “From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day” (Matthew 16:21).

Jerrie Barber

[jerrie@barberclippings.com](mailto:jerrie@barberclippings.com)

[www.barberclippings.com](http://www.barberclippings.com)

<http://barberclippings.blogspot.com/>

P. O. Box 176

107 Rockland Road

Hendersonville, Tennessee 37077

Church phone: (615) 824-6622  
Home phone: (615) 356-8371  
Cell phone: (615) 584-0512

---

John H. Parker  
[Johnparker22@aol.com](mailto:Johnparker22@aol.com)  
[www.interimcofc.com](http://www.interimcofc.com)  
(615) 373-4462

---

To subscribe to this newsletter: > [Subscribe page](#) .