



Ten Commandments for Welcoming a New Pastor

I. Thou shalt not compare the old Pastor and the new Pastor, for the Lord thy God has made each person unique and wishes you to appreciate each original creation.

II. Thou shalt not expect everything to stay the same when the new Pastor arrives. Nor shalt thou resist change, nor assume that change is bad, but thou shalt trust that the Lord thy God isn't finished with your church yet and is bringing change for your good and the good of your mission.

III. Thou shalt not make graven images of thine old grudges, nor shalt thou keep stale disappointments in the temple of thine heart, but thou shalt forgive and move on in the grace of the Lord thy God, for how can thou ask God for mercy unless thou give mercy from thine heart?

IV. Thou shalt not commit gossip, nor shalt thou fearfully complain, nor shalt thou listen to those who do, but instead thou shalt entreat them to adjust their attitudes and lighten up, for everything shall be alright, and in fact, shall turn out very well indeed – better than you can even imagine.

V. Thou shalt not commit nostalgia or say that the old days were better, for in so doing thou shalt make thy judgment come true. Be assured that the Lord thy God is not falling asleep at the wheel, but will be with thee and surprise thee with abundant blessings, more than thou canst contain or count.

VI. Thou shalt not factionalize nor create "us-them" divisions, but thou shalt unify with thy brothers and sisters even when they annoy or confuse you.

VII. Thou shalt not come to the new pastor with your demands, pressure, complaints, bad reports, manipulations, threats, agendas, unsolicited advice, or snide comments. But thou shalt say, "Welcome! How can we help you? We love you! We would like to increase our giving significantly. We're praying for you and your family. Welcome to our community! We baked you some cookies!" And each week, thou shalt do so again and again until the new pastor begs you to stop.

VIII. Thou shalt increase thy giving, and not withhold thy tithe, but invest thy money and thine heart in the future of thy community of faith and mission.

IX. Thou shalt not come to thine old and former pastor with anything but praise for the new pastor, but thou mayest bring thy concerns to God in humble prayer, and if thou must, thou may also share concerns with the duly appointed leaders of the church.

X. Most important, thou shalt trust God, and stay connected to God, and draw strength from God, staying deeply rooted in the message of God's grace. For God is good, and God will never leave you nor forsake you. You can count on that for sure!

By Brian D. McLaren, an author, speaker, activist and public theologian. He is a former college English teacher and pastor.