

Case Study 1 (NPS-Baptism)

You are a recent seminary graduate called as pastor of a church that has newly joined the ECC after a long affiliation with a different denomination. You are younger than the members of your leadership team, most of whom had been involved in the church before it joined the ECC. A new young couple enthusiastically begins attending your church and asks you to baptize their newborn. Your church's leadership team, however, has never been involved in an infant baptism and several do not believe in such baptisms. They ask that you encourage the couple to have their child dedicated but not baptized.

1. What factors must you consider regarding this situation?
2. What conversations do you need to have?
3. How would you handle the couple's request for their child to be baptized?

Case Study 2

(ACCW) You are a female pastor serving at a Covenant church. The senior pastor recently shared that he is considering retirement, and will be working on a succession plan with the leadership team. You have been serving on staff as the family ministries coordinator and have not preached often, beyond children's messages from time to time. You have preached at other churches and the senior pastor has heard and affirmed your messages. He has stated he believes you have a ministry call and affirms women in ministry but is concerned about key influencers in the church who are not ready for a female lead pastor and are very vocal. Although he believes you would be a wonderful candidate, he, apologetically, wanted you to know that a lead pastor position in this church was too controversial and unlikely.

1. What issues need to be addressed?
2. What might some next steps be for this scenario?
3. Identify which Covenant resources are available to assist you in this scenario.

Case Study 3

(ACCW) You are a male pastor serving at a Covenant church. The senior pastor recently shared that he is considering retirement and will be working on a succession plan with the leadership team. You have been serving on staff as the family ministries coordinator and have not preached often, beyond children's messages from time to time. There is also a female colleague who is the director of discipleship. She has preached a little more often and has begun taking on more leadership responsibilities. In your mind, she is the perfect person to become the next lead pastor. However, you've noticed that when the topic is raised, the senior pastor directs the conversation toward you. On one occasion you asked the senior pastor if he was also talking with your female colleague, to which the lead pastor brusquely said, the church isn't ready for that.

1. What issues need to be addressed?
2. What might some next steps be for this scenario?
3. Identify which Covenant resources are available to assist you in this scenario.

Case Study 4; Church Evicted

You are the pastor of a strong Spanish-speaking Latina church. You took over this church after the pastor who planted the church moved out of the country. You have been the pastor for the past 10 years. The church is thriving and stronger than ever with almost 150 in attendance. The Church has been renting from the English-speaking Covenant church for 20-plus years of its existence. Although there have been bumps in the road you have always felt like you have tried to partner with the other church. One Sunday morning, as you arrive at church for prepping and worship practice the Chair of the English-speaking church hands you a letter from the Church Board letting you know that you have 30 days to move out. They don't give a reason other than needing space for future growth. You are devastated and must tell your Leadership team with a heavy heart.

1. What are your first steps in discerning a way forward?
2. Who else needs to know about this situation?
3. What does pastoral care look like for your leadership team and church?
4. What alternatives do you envision for this scenario?

Case Study 5 (Immigration ALIPE)

You are the pastor of a multi-ethnic church. Norma has just arrived to live with her cousin, one of your church leaders. Norma left her home country because her husband was killed by the cartel and she feared for the safety of her children. Other children had already been abducted. This leader has confided in the church chair that Norma is undocumented and wants to get a job and asked him for prayer. The church chair is outraged and comes to you asking you to speak to the other leader about sending her away or else he will take matters into his own hands and call ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). Norma is a single mother and has 2 small children, She is unable to get any government assistance and needs to provide for her family. She reached out to her cousin for help because she knew that he was a leader at his church and he always spoke to her about giving her life to Jesus.

1. Do you need to discuss this situation with any other church leaders?
2. Do you have an obligation to inform the denomination?
3. How do you share with the church community what is happening and the reasons why?
4. What are other issues that come up?

Case Study 6

You are pastoring a church and have successfully launched an Alpha program that has become quite popular in the church and larger community. In your last Alpha class, an older couple attended, and they both made first-time professions of faith. They are the first converts in the last 15 years of this church's ministry, and they began attending the church regularly. Six months later, they ask you about joining the church and express their interest in being baptized, telling you how warm the fellowship is and what a great community this has been for them. They also confide in you that they are not legally married since that would mean a significant loss of retirement income and would necessitate that they apply for state services. They tell you that they have been a committed couple for over five years and ask you about a commitment ceremony

5. How might you counsel this couple?
6. How would you receive their request to be baptized?
7. What factors must you consider regarding their membership

Case Study 7

Another Covenant pastor has come to you to confess that their spouse has discovered pornography on their computer. The spouse thinks they should resign as pastor, but they do not see it as a significant problem. They explain that it only happens occasionally, and they have control of it. You really appreciate their friendship, style and giftedness, but you are concerned for their health, wholeness, marriage, and the ongoing ability to lead the church. You wonder if this is an indication of a more serious addiction.

1. What are your first steps in discerning a way forward?
2. Who else needs to know about this situation?
3. What does pastoral care look like?
4. What alternatives do you envision for this scenario?

Case Study 8

You are the lead pastor of a multi-staff Covenant church. You serve with a gifted worship arts pastor who holds a ministry license and is on the ordination track. You have been at the church 10 years, and she has been serving with you for three years. She is 32 years old and recently engaged.. She is letting you know that she and her fiancé are planning to take a cruise to celebrate. In the conversation, you discover that she and her fiancé have been sexually intimate and will be sharing a stateroom on this cruise. She sees no ethical problems with the arrangement since they are in a committed relationship and plan to be wed.

1. Do you need to discuss this situation with any other church leader?
2. How would you explore her understanding of the ethical principles and her consent to live within them?
3. Do you have an obligation to inform the superintendent and/or the denomination? How would you handle this?
4. If the denomination suspends her license and the congregation wants to keep her employed anyway, what do you do?

Case Study 9

You are the lead pastor at a Covenant church. Your youth ministry has attracted a small group of LGBTQ+ students. The youth ministry leaders have done a good job of holding to the Covenant's position on human sexuality while maintaining a posture of unconditional love. The LGBTQ+ students report they feel loved, accepted, and included in the youth ministry. These students also report feeling unwelcome, judged, and excluded by the larger congregation when attending adult-focused church services and events. Most do not continue attending the church after graduation.

1. What are the underlying issues at play in this situation?
2. How can you lead the church into greater empathy and acceptance for these students?
3. How can you, the youth ministry leaders and the elders/board/council, help these students connect with the larger Church?