

Pastor Redeployment

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It's a common statistic that when a senior pastor gets older, younger families may not be as easily attracted to his church, which is where most church growth comes from. So, what's a pastor to do?

If you're into your 50's or 60's you may be feeling frustrated if your church isn't continuing to grow. Perhaps another ministry might be where the Lord wants you.

When the founding pastor of my church, [Calvary Community](#), retired as senior pastor, he started a new [ministry](#) to take what he had learned at Calvary to the Church at large. Another founding pastor, where I was once an elder, had done mission trips to India to train nationals. When he retired from that role, he raised supporters from his church and now makes several teaching trips to the mission field each year.

Another idea, particularly if the pastor and his wife have good health, enjoy mission trips (or even been a missionary) and have a sense of adventure, is to become the pastor of an international church. Whether it be some place like San Jose, Costa Rica or Islamabad, Pakistan if one feels called of God to the ministry that's all that matters. Nowhere in the Bible does it say we are supposed to be comfortable...just obedient.

Some international churches are large enough to pay a reasonable salary and often have paid professional staff. Other churches have only 50 people attending and can only offer a small salary although they would love to pay more as the church grows. So the opportunities vary.

What makes international churches unique? One, they are oftentimes non-denominational and acknowledge that some members may believe or practice their faith differently than others (i.e., water baptism versus sprinkling). While teaching/preaching the Gospel they tend to avoid theological differences that might divide but rather concentrate on the major points of salvation and the integration of Christ into our lives.

Secondly, the congregation will likely be primarily international expats (corporate management types or NGO workers and missionaries) and English-speaking nationals. A fair amount of expats leave after a few years, so transition is an ongoing factor. During school vacation periods and holidays many families will travel to their home country. Expat believers usually have a home church somewhere else and many still tithed there, so they may not be principally tithing to their international church.

International churches have a wonderful feeling of community. Relationships become deep and heartfelt. New growth in attendance is likely to come via getting to know the friends of present attenders or via involvement with the international school (maybe there a Christian international school), the country club or the American-XXXXX Chamber of Commerce. The feeling of being a "big fish in a little pond" is common and even feels quite good in a positive way. You are making a big difference in a smaller place.

Preaching isn't typically the most important aspect, but one must be quite pastoral and hands on. There may be little or even no paid staff. The elder board may or may not be strong, so this person needs to be wise in making good strategic and tactical decisions. Having a participative, collegial style, developing buy-in is important.

This is an ideal situation for someone who's been a missionary and loves being in the field and working in another culture. Being a seminary or Bible college graduate with the ability to preach, although may not have done much preaching, might find this very fulfilling.

Both the pastor and the spouse need to feel the Lord's calling to the location and the ministry. Only one having a sense of adventure is not sufficient. When making the decision if the spouse senses a lack of comfort in the situation, it will likely intensify and probably become problematical. Both need to be on board.

The Lord has given you experience and gifting that He wants to be well used. If you are sensing that God may be calling you to a new season of service are you open to being redeployed? Call me if you want to just chat or for me to keep you in mind if an opening arises that might be where you'd be called.