

How to Use These Resources

Some Tools and Tips by Bob Sheldon

bob.sheldon@presbynet.org

We can't learn everything in seminary. It would make seminary last at least ten years! Seminary is a great place to learn about biblical interpretation, theology, ethics, and pastoral counseling. It is not the place most pastors learn the practical parts of church ministry. There's just not enough time! Our presbyteries can be a vital source of learning and growing these skills. A better approach is to learn "how to run a church" as part of our ongoing experience, with the assistance and encouragement of those who have gone before us and done it before us. These materials are a few tools to help you build a valued and valuable ministry.

Everybody needs this stuff—and nobody has it. I wish I would have had these resources when I began my first church in 1984—but I didn't. Instead, I had wise mentors who guided me through the early years of ministry, helping me understand what I had done wrong and how I could do it better next time. And I took good notes. These resources were created to help all pastors, particularly those in their early years of ministry, to have "something" to use and share with your church leaders as you do those church tasks that every church has to do all the time. These tasks are not the fancy, flashy parts of the job. They are the simple "nuts and bolts" that make the church "run." Hopefully, these resources will help you and your church to run more smoothly.

Combatting the tyranny of the "Blank Page." One of the most intimidating things that we pastors face is that proverbial "blank page." Every week, we sit down to begin another week's worship and work—and that blank page just laughs at us! Some of us hunt around for some inspiration; others just think "I'll get to it tomorrow." One of my early mentors wisely advised me: "The earlier in the week you finish your sermon, the more you will enjoy being a pastor." These resources are designed to provide a starting point, where we can build upon what others have begun. No more blank pages!

We're here to help you. These materials are based on years of experience and ideas from many pastors and leaders, who have shared their experiences with others—and eventually into this resource. They are copyrighted to protect them from someone "claiming" them. They are available to you and your congregation free of charge, as our way of helping you lead your people in meaningful and fruitful ways. If you need something that is not included in these resources, don't hesitate to contact your presbytery or Bob Sheldon directly. We will work together to get you what you need—because we're here to help you.

These resources are the accumulated wisdom of the church. In 1992, I created the original *Personal Funeral Planning Guide*, because I had so many people dying in my larger, older church I had just begun serving. In 1995, my Session requested and created the first *Session Covenant* because they had had problems with previous members acting disrespectfully while serving on session. And the rest of the resources grew from there. Every resource was created, and later improved, by the people I have met and the congregations I have served. As a pastor and interim pastor, I have served fourteen congregations, combined with ten years serving the denomination in stewardship and funds development—and when you're talking about money, you end up talking about every area of the church. These congregations, the leaders who served them, combined with countless executives and presbyters have contributed to these resources, as

a way to make the nuts-and-bolts of the church easier for our pastors. That's why we are sharing them with you. You are a vital member of God's work in this world—and we want to help you in any way we can. As you use these resources, you might put your own stamp on them to improve them even further.

These resources are a beginning point for you and your ministry. All of these documents are designed for your adjustment and improvement. They have been copyrighted in their present form to protect them on our behalf. They are provided in Microsoft formats, primarily Word documents, which are both easy to edit and easily transferred to Apple, Google, and any other format you want. Simply download the resource you want, review it, and revise it to fit your situation and personality. Then you have a choice:

1. If you prefer to have an “outside expert,” add to reference to me or your presbytery—whichever will get more “authority” in your church—and print it as presented.
2. Or if you prefer, change a few words on it, claim it as your own, and share it with your Session or appropriate group.

Either way works for us. This is not about who gets the credit. It's about helping you and your church to have the resources you need to serve

All of these resources can be better—with your help. As you are reviewing these resources, you may have something that you like better, or have an idea that would make this resource better. Please share it! Please share your resources, so they can be incorporated into future versions, thereby improving the “accumulated wisdom of the church” for those who will follow all of us.

Because these materials are distributed through our presbyteries, please send your ideas to me at bob.sheldon@presbynet.org. I will add them into the collection of resources, and make sure it's distributed to the participating presbyteries. I can't wait to see who you have to share!

Thank you for your dedication and service to our church. Years ago, I came across a line that became my byline and a guiding principle for ministry and life: “We've all in this together.” And we are. Thank you for all that you are doing to lead our church, and to bring God's desires for our world a little closer to reality. God has put you in this particular time and particular place for a particular—sacred—purpose. Keep up the good work—and let us know how we can help you.

Who Compiled These Resources?

Bob Sheldon loves helping pastors and churches. As a gift to our church, Bob has dedicated two years to compiling these resources for our pastors and congregations. Most came from his personal collection from years of service. For over forty years, Bob has enjoyed his calling as an interim pastor, pastor, consultant, counselor, and executive. Serving as a professional Intentional Interim Pastor, Bob served twelve congregations (150-2000 members) in nine states, and has led workshops in transitional ministry and funds development. For ten years, Bob served our denomination as the Director of Funds Development for the Synod of the Rocky Mountains, where he helped over 150 congregations to improve their financial goals. Recently, Bob “retired” to Rochester Hills, Michigan.

Brad Munroe loves looking forward. Brad served as the editor for these resources, as well as providing many of the documents in the *Church Conflict*, *Leadership*, and *Missional Church* sections. For nearly thirty years, Brad has served a pastor, author, coach, and consultant for our church. Presently, Brad serves as Presbytery Pastor for the Presbyteries of de Christo and Grand Canyon. As an accomplished author of three books and countless articles, he has shared his experience and expertise to make these resources clearer—and better!