

Hello David,

I apologize for a slow response. I've been teaching a doctoral seminar this past week and finished late yesterday.

I'm excited to know that MX continues in conversations with Ethan. He is a great candidate and a gifted minister. Your MOU looks comprehensive and names important features about expectations and relationships.

The things that I would want to inquire deeper about are the mentoring expectations near the end of the document. If I were Ethan I would find it odd to find it stated that I am supposed to engage with Jeff for mentoring, feedback, and training. Mentees usually choose their own mentors and it is problematic for the outgoing minister to be placed in a position of being a person to offer feedback to the new minister's performance. Feedback would be appropriate from the elders. Yet setting Jeff into the framework places Ethan in a situation of having multiple and quite possibly varying opinions about his work. Finally, the idea that Ethan needs training seems a bit much.

Jeff has much to offer to Ethan in the transition. Yet that relationship needs to emerge through informal engagement that Ethan chooses to embrace. Placing formal expectations about that relationship could easily hamper the very thing you desire--the success of your new minister. If Ethan is your lead minister, then he needs to be your lead minister. (After Jeff's long tenure, as I have noted before, Jeff's role and relationship with the church and the new minister will require a great deal of attention.)

Likewise, I'm curious about the other notation about mentoring with a group of unnamed multi-generational leaders. That is a great idea. However, I'm not sure it needs to be in this MOU. Who picks this group? How they are formed will matter greatly. It would be much better if Ethan has a lot of agency about such a group and he would initiate it. If it is a group that the elders or Jeff develop, then it could easily become another "management" group.

If mentoring is important to the MX elders (and I believe it should be), then I would recommend that the mentoring that Ethan really needs is from an outside, experienced minister. This is a standard practice that I do see in MOU agreements where elders make available some funds for a minister to compensate a mentor. I have a couple of ideas about an appropriate person if you wish to pursue that angle.

If I were Ethan I would also want to know a little more about my relationship to the elders--how do I relate to the elder group, do I help develop an agenda for elders' meetings, am I at the table in all decision-making, etc. I would also think he might want to know what does it mean to supervise staff--does he have hire/fire responsibilities, etc. I don't think that is necessary to be fully spelled out in the MOU--yet some clarity might be helpful.

David--I've probably made this too long. Happy to follow up if it would be helpful. Blessings as you and the elder group continue your prayerful deliberations!

Peace,
Carson