YOU’RE LOOKING …
Post-university jobs will be both easier and more challenging:
  easier because you won’t have school vying for your full attention; and
  harder because you won’t have school vying for your full attention … and thus will be held more accountable.

Be open to living in exotic locales. For the Northerner, that will be the South. For the Southerner, that will be the North. For the Big City Gal, that will be small-town, rural America. For the Country Boy, that will be NYC/LA/Boston/SanFran/Philly/Chicago. You will be surprised!

Do not snub your noses at the South: this region of the world is the last bastion of Christianity and one of the few places left on the planet that still has the collective resources to hire multi-person staffs and to field choirs with dozens upon dozens of committed volunteers … even in small cities and large towns.

Don’t limit yourself to considering only churches in your own tradition or that subscribe to your ideology or that have a preponderance of “your kind.”

YOU ARRIVE …
It will take a year or more to get settled in …
  to your home
  to your office
  to a routine
  to knowing where the best coffee shops are located

Support the legacy of your predecessor. Don’t bad-mouth him or her: it will “get back.”

YOU WANT TO STAY …
To join or not to join … that is the question. Consult with your pastor/priest. If you don’t pledge where you work, pledge at a neighboring congregation.

Resist the temptation to ghetto-ize. Don’t just hang out with “your people.” If you’re __________, find out what life is like on “the other side.” Cliques are so high school.

Teach. Seize any and all opportunities to put yourself in front of your congregation:
  pre-service “musical moments”
  adult ed opportunities (see attached)
Know your religious tradition:
  Read books about the Bible, theology, your tradition.
  Subscribe to denominational periodicals.
  Become a member of your denominational musicians’ organization – and then attend its conferences.
  Even consider attending your denomination’s conferences. Horror of horrors … there may be discussions centered on matters that have nothing to do with church music!

Know other religious traditions: you never know when this will be useful or even necessary.
  Attend services in other traditions
  Obtain hymnals outside your tradition

Model observant behavior
  Attend spoken services
  Bow your head at “Let us pray” and make your choirs do the same.
  Don’t fidget during services, and make your choirs equally fidget-free. They’re going to resist you at first but will eventually come around. Better to stand by convictions that are shared by the entire congregation than by those that are, at best, minor concerns (“What do you mean, you don’t want me to use the cornet on stanza 3??!!”).
  Don’t talk/text/e-mail/FB/etc. during services.
  Don’t let anyone think you’re there just for the music.

Know your staff, starting with the sextons/janitors, working your way down from there.
  Use names.
  Introduce them to your friends and colleagues.

Know your congregation outside your choir(s).
  Use names.
  “The customer is always right.”
    Random congregant at coffee hour:
      “The communion hymn was too loud.”
    Bad answer:
      “Go jump in that vat of bad church coffee.”
    Good answer:
      “Thank-you for saying something. When are your free for lunch so we can discuss this important matter further?”

Attend non-musical events
  small-group gatherings
  council meetings
  retreats
  non-musical lectures
Befriend the altar guild ladies who’ve been there for centuries.

Befriend the ushers who are CEOs of Fortune 500 companies.

Befriend the acolytes who dropped out of choir because it wasn’t cool enough.

Befriend the members of your governing council and not just because they control the budget.

Offer to help:
move chairs
stuff envelopes
fold leaflets
make coffee (yours will be better)

You will receive lots of invitations from un-cool people not of your kind. Be a full human being: respond. White lie, if you have to, but at least respond.

Find one or two kvetching partners that you know you can trust outside your congregation. Is finding kvetching partners too difficult? Get a therapist. Whatever you do, don’t kvetch inside your congregation: it will get back.

Develop decent communication habits with people outside your very closest circles:
Bad way to answer the phone:
“Hiiiiii.”

“Hello … ?”

Good way to answer the phone:
“Hi! This is Jason!”

Bad way to answer a text/e-mail/FB message:
no salutation/no names/no final bidding

Good way to answer a text/e-mail/FB message:
“Many thanks, Josephine.
I really appreciate …
Take care – Jim
555-555-5555 / cell”

When in doubt (and please be in doubt 97.3% of the time!), be overly courtly. You never know who is going to think you’re rude.

Never assume anyone remembers your name. Introduce yourself, re-introduce yourself, re-introduce yourself again and then keep on re-introducing yourself. Particularly in large churches, people with heavy work responsibilities will not be able to remember your name, if they only see you every so often. Shocking, I know … but true!

Romantic liaisons? Go outside your congregation.

YOU MOVE ON …
Leave on good terms.
If dismissed/released/fired … even then, leave on good terms. If you have a “case” and truth is on your side, engage the AGO and/or your denominational musicians’ organization.

Stay in touch, only if the other person makes the first move. In other words, stay out of the way of your successor.

Don’t bad-mouth your successor. Only say positive things – even if it kills you to be dis-honest.