

# Caring For the Called Servants of Christ.

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## Guidelines

## **Preface**

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### **I. Introduction: The Spirit of the Guidelines**

Your Christian pastor responds to the “call” from God with a joyful heart and a willing dedication to serve within the sphere of pastoral duties. As not all of the pastor’s duties are detailed in the call documents or in the diploma of vocation, the possibilities for ministry within your congregations are limited only by the Holy Scripture. The mission vision of your congregation and the talents of your pastor and lay leaders contribute greatly to enacting possibilities.

Your other called or commissioned staff members (parochial school teacher, Director of Parish Services, Director of Christian Education, other) likewise respond from Godly dedications. Their duties may be somewhat more defined by the appropriate board within your congregation. Their commitment is to serve to the glory of God and the Christian growth of persons within the scope of their care.

Your congregation may employ other staff members as are necessary for secretarial, custodial or other purposes. Their duties and time commitment will probably be defined quite clearly. All employees of your congregation, whether called, commissioned, or hired, deserve the care that says: We are all servants of the Lord and we have a mutual concern for spiritual, emotional, and physical well being. Building and maintaining a caring relationship between your congregation and those who serve or minister is vital to the health of your congregation. Frederick A. Niedner wrote:

“Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things’ (Galatians 6:6 KJV). To ‘communicate’ is to share. Sharing is a beautiful word that describes attitudes and actions which are mutually supportive. Certainly the connotation of the work infers willingness and joyfulness. The inclusion of ‘all good things’ is the Lord’s way of getting at every positive aspect of a relationship. The context of the passage is one of caring at its finest.”

As that caring takes place the whole people of God have the joyful privilege of participating in the ministry of Christ Jesus to the world - beginning right in the home parish. The Bible describes the relationship of the pastor and congregation as mutual love and support dedicated to the mission of Christ.

It would be well to keep this in mind as your congregation considers salary, study, and other appropriate remuneration and caring policies on a continued basis.

### **II. Caring for Church Workers: Spiritual Concern**

The service of Installation for a Pastor might alert us to the congregation’s responsibility in this regard. Note the words addressed to the congregation:

“You have heard the solemn promise of him called to be your pastor. Will you now receive him? show him that love, honor and obedience in the Lord which you owe to the shepherd and teacher placed over you in your Lord Jesus Christ, and will you.... Pray for him always that in his labors he may retain a cheerful spirit and that his ministry among you may be abundantly blessed?” (Similar words for those installed or commissioned into a teaching ministry)

“Receive”, “show”, “pray for” are all action words which note an ongoing concern by the congregation for those called to serve. That genuine concern needs to take some factors into account:

- For the sake of others to whom he ministers, the pastor needs to take care of his own spiritual health;
- If the religious problems of others warrant his attention, so also do his own;
- Because religion is his vocation it can easily be professionalized;
- Laity have the responsibility not only to receive care from the pastor, but also to give care to him.

In order to assist the Pastor in nurturing his spiritual life the congregation may want to consider encouraging him to take an annual 2-3 day retreat for meditation on the Word of God and for prayer; one of the elders might arrange to meet with the pastor on a regular basis in order to study the Word and to pray together. The pastor might be encouraged to have a “father confessor” or mentor who may be another pastor.

The Apostle Paul bid the church in Galatia to “carry each others burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).” Shall we do any less? What a blessing when pastor and people strive for and find a joyous partnership in the Gospel of God. (Phil. 1:5)

### **III. Caring for Church Workers: Emotional Demands**

There are similarities between the problems of a business and those of a minister. This does not mean, however, that his problems are nothing but the problems of a businessman. William Hulme, a professor of pastoral counseling writes:

“The demands upon the minister are similar to those upon other professional men, but at least in one respect they are unique. The minister is a leader in faith. The qualities for this demand are deeply personal...His leadership in faith is different than having administrative ability, speaking ability or even personality appeal...The defender of faith would also like to have more support from ‘sight’ ...As a professional religionist, the minister is continually burning his bridges behind him---putting himself out on a limb---in the pulpit, in the Bible class, at the sickbed, and at the graveside.”

Your staff members are very much human, with weaknesses and strengths, with likes and dislikes, with physical and emotional needs. You know this; your staff knows this. Sadly, the incidents of burn-out, pastoral fatigue, marriage problems and other symptoms of high stress – coupled with low personal satisfaction in many cases – are ever increasing.

What might be a goal to strive for? You must honestly face the truth if your servants in ministry have problems. You need not, however, dwell on these problems excessively. Of course, if the pastor is experiencing problems, he should be approached with gentleness and in private by one of the leaders of the congregation.

You will want to thank God for your servants in ministry. You will want to commend your pastor for his faithfulness. (Please note: God asks pastors to be faithful in Gospel sharing; He, our Lord, is responsible for the success of the Gospel.) You will want to help your pastor express his joys in ministry. You will want to dwell on the blessings which both he and you, through Him, have received from a gracious and loving God.

The preventive medicine of love, care and prayer support which your congregation can offer your professional staff should not be overlooked. Listening to the expressed concerns of your staff and watching for those unexpressed can be vital. An elder’s friendship visit in the staff members’ homes may be welcomed. Your congregation may explore many possibilities for giving a clear message: “We truly care!” The congregation may want to consider these possibilities: recognizing “Clergy Appreciation Month”; giving your staff Christmas and Easter gifts; providing your staff with an additional weekend off; encouraging members to send the staff handwritten thank you cards; inviting your staff and their families to members’ homes for supper etc. The elders might also encourage people to call the pastor at home only in the event of an emergency. One of the most important actions members of a congregation can take that will enhance the emotional welfare of the pastor and staff is a willingness on the part of the members to participate actively in the ministry and mission initiatives that the pastor and staff have started.

### **IV. A Word About Evaluations:**

An item that might well be considered is an evaluation process for and with staff members. Roy K. Holm wrote that the purpose of this evaluation might be as follows:

“The review should not be approached with the intent to merely level criticism at one another. It should be an opportunity for a congregation to become aware of its effectiveness in supporting the needs and works of its pastor(s) and staff, and for the pastor(s) and staff to become aware of their effectiveness in serving the needs of the parish. The annual review is intended to be a two way communication...to emphasize areas of strengths and hopefully to forestall problem situations.”

## **V. Caring for Church Workers: Physical Needs**

There are many areas in the physical realm where Christian congregations might bring praise to God as they commit themselves to the care and keeping of those servants whom God has placed in their midst. Salary setting is always a basic concern because the physical and material needs of those called into the employ of the congregation need to be met. There are clear Scriptural principles to be considered.

- Our Lord said: “The laborer is worthy of his hire.” (Luke 10:7)
- Paul wrote to Timothy: “The laborer is worthy of his reward.” (1Tim 5:18)
- Paul wrote to Corinth: “...the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.” (1Cor. 9:14)

Though salary setting is the responsibility of the whole congregation, the voters’ assembly might well be advised to study salary scales and bring recommendations through a select committee. Committee members should be persons who know the community, economically and socially, and who understand what it will take to permit church staff to live comfortably in the community.

The base salary is a key factor which normally needs review on an annual basis. Special gifts and perquisites (weddings, funerals, etc.) vary so much from year to year and person to person that such income should not be taken into account in budget setting. Nor is a working wife a major consideration.

What shall be taken into consideration is the minister’s ability (likewise the teacher or other staff member), the experience, the amount and kind of work, the purchase value of the dollar, and the financial ability of the congregation. In 1932, sainted Dr. Fritz wrote:

“it is a disgrace and a sin if a church that is able to pay its minister a living salary compels him, in order that he may make ends meet, to earn additional money at some other occupation. On the other hand, it is a disgrace and a sin if a minister whose congregation pays him an adequate salary nevertheless spends time which he ought to give to his congregation and for which his congregation is paying him in doing other work in order that he may get more money.”

Permit a caring suggestion. If the worker has expressed or somehow indicates an inability to manage finances, might not a trained financial manager be asked to help on a confidential basis. If a professional staff member suffers from financial concerns, his or her ministry might suffer as a result. It might also be noted that the failure to derive job satisfaction is often translated into complaints about salary, persons, etc. Let a caring and loving evaluation committee be very perceptive.

Conclusion:

None of us reaches maturity by ourselves; it is the community that enfolds us and nourishes us, and the community becomes more unified as we learn this together. St. Paul describes this reality well when he writes to the Christian leaders and members of the church in Ephesus, “It is he [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ...From him [Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself in love, as each part does its work.”(Ephesians 4:11-13, 16)