

Church Ministry Employment Manual

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Chapter 2

The Pastor as Church Equipper

Introduction

The basic premise of this Manual is that misunderstandings over the proper scope and limits of the pastor's professionalism lie at the root of the problem of poor pastor-church relations in Canada. For our purposes, the scope and limits of the pastor's professionalism may be understood as consisting of three essential parts. These parts include: 1) what a pastor is, 2) what a pastor does, and 3) how a pastor should be treated in the hire of the local church. While there are many churches that do recognize the professionalism of their pastors, and as such, extend to them the recognition, rights, and controls common to all professionals, there are many churches that, by degrees, do not. But it is precisely ***where the understanding of the pastor's professionalism is weakest problems are most likely to occur in pastor-church relations***. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief, but thorough, conceptual framework for understanding the pastor as professional church equipper. By identifying the pastor as first a true employee, and then as a true professional, to be followed by a brief outline of the primary function and roles of the pastor, in accordance with our theory of the Synergistic Church, it is hoped both churches and pastors can come to a workable understanding concerning the true scope and limits of the pastor's professionalism in the local church.

The Pastor as True Employee

The fundamental relationship between the church and the pastor is the employment relationship. Therefore the church must do all it can to protect and enhance the pastor's status as a true employee in that relationship. Because of long tradition, in particular the historic division between church and state, the church has been slow and inconsistent in its recognition of modern employment principles and practices. Of particular concern is the blurring of boundaries between the roles and function of the pastorate and those of the trustee leadership of the church. The result has been to diminish the level of trust in the "system" of church operations, and to cause much unnecessary hardship for pastor and church alike. Long experience in the secular working world has demonstrated there are three key principles that succeed in establishing clear boundaries between employer and employee, thereby keeping potential abuses in the employment relationship to a minimum. The first of these is that ***the rights and interests of both the employer, and the employee, should be recognized, respected, and defended.*** This means that churches and pastors must establish and diligently abide by standards and protocols that protect their mutual rights and interests, especially when problems arise in the employment relationship. The second key principle is that ***the rights and interests of both the employer and the employee should be free from the fact, or even the appearance, of a conflict of interest.*** This means pastors, as true employees, can be made ex-officio members of church boards, but they should not be

made voting members of the church boards that hire them. The third is that ***the rights and interests of both the employer and the employee should be free from the fact, or even the appearance, of an abuse of powers or standards.*** This means pastors, as true employees, should not be given, nor should be allowed to take trustee power or authority, which properly and legally belongs to the church board that hired them.

The Pastor as True Professional

While the fundamental relationship between the church and pastor is the employment relationship, ***the reason for the employment relationship is the professional expertise the pastor brings to the church.*** Therefore the church must do everything it can to protect and enhance the pastor's true professionalism. In addition to the five marks of the true professional that are exhibited by pastors in the pursuit of their profession mentioned in the previous chapter, there are three other determining factors that are practiced by all the other modern professions, and must also be taken into consideration in the preservation of the pastor's professionalism in his or her service to the church. The first of these is that ***pastors as true professionals have full control of the scope and limits of their particular expertise in the church.*** This means it should be the pastors, as a formal body within the wider church, or association of churches, that ought to be determining what a pastor is, and what a pastor does, in the performance of their expertise. The second determining factor is that ***pastors as true professionals have full control over the decision-making and actual performance of their work.*** This means that once the scope and limits of the pastor's professionalism are decided by the professionals that make it up, and agreed to by the church, it is the prerogative of each pastor to perform their particular expertise as they see fit within the employment framework offered by the hiring church. The third determining factor is that ***pastors as true professionals have full control over the establishment and maintenance of their professional conduct and standards of performance.*** This means that though the right to hire and terminate the pastor's employment must always rest with the church as the employer, because of the highly specialized nature of the work the pastor does, the final determination of the pastor's fitness to serve, leading to hiring and termination, must be decided within the profession itself.

The Pastor as Church Equipper

It is the scope and limits of the pastor's professionalism that should determine what a pastor can be legitimately expected to do, and not to do, in his or her service to the local church. Therefore the church, as employer, must recognize and respect the proper scope and limits of the pastor's professionalism, and hire the pastor accordingly. However, many churches do not provide either a formal statement concerning what the pastor's professionalism consists of, nor have they established a formal body or association made up of their pastors to determine the scope and limits of that professionalism. It is, therefore, in the absence of these two critical structures, which are common to all the other professions, our theory of the Synergistic Church can provide

some necessary answers. In accordance with our theory, *equipping Church Leadership and the General Congregation for ministry is the primary function of the Pastorate.*

This equipping function is, in turn, realized in the performance the two General Ministry Objectives that are performed by the Pastorate. These General Ministry Objectives are: 1) imparting Bible knowledge, and 2) facilitating others in imparting Bible knowledge. We are able to confirm this assertion by showing how the two General Ministry Objectives accurately reflect and functionally describe the traditional range of activities performed by the professional pastor in the local church.

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|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1) Worship/Rites of Passage | - | impart Bible |
| 2) Preaching/Teaching/Counseling | - | impart Bible |
| 3) Pastoral Care | - | impart Bible |
| 4) Ministry Administration | - | facilitate others |

In the Proto and Meta Synergistic phases of church growth the pastor will perform both General Ministry Objectives, along with other secondary functions as required. In the Pan Synergistic phase of church growth the solo pastor will perform the two General Ministry Objectives exclusively. In the Pan Synergistic phase, where two or more pastors are serving in the church, a division of labor occurs where each successive pastor takes on more specialized duties within the boundaries of these Objectives. Therefore, no matter how many pastors are serving, even in the very largest of mega-churches, *the two General Ministry Objectives of imparting Bible knowledge, and facilitating others in imparting Bible knowledge, for the purpose of equipping the church for ministry, constitute the true scope and limits of the pastor's professionalism.*

The Pastor as Symbolic Leader

It is from our recognition of the pastor's two General Ministry Objectives we are then able to accurately determine the legitimate roles of the professional pastor in the local church. *The first professional role of the pastor is as that of "symbolic leader".* The performance of the first General Ministry Objective, of imparting Bible knowledge, is largely a very public one. As is indicated in the above paragraph, it consists of performing public worship, rites of passage, preaching, teaching, counseling and pastoral care. Thus the pastor's pulpit ministry and general availability to those in the church, and the wider public, causes him or her to assume real figurehead status. Nevertheless, the fundamental relationship of the pastor remains as a true employee of the church. This means the pastor cannot legitimately assume overall church "leadership", as he or she as a professional employee, is legally and ethically subordinate to the trustee leadership that did the hiring, pays the salary, and will eventually preside over the pastor's termination. It is, therefore, on the basis of the pastor assuming the necessary figurehead status, while at the same time remaining a true employee, we are able to conclude the first professional role of the pastor is that of being symbolic leader of the local church.

The Pastor as Ministry Center

The second professional role of the pastor is that of “ministry center”. In contrast to the very public ministry of the first Objective, the performance of the second General Ministry Objective, of facilitating others in imparting Bible knowledge, is a very central one. In practical terms the facilitation of others includes the supervision, training and support of all those who perform the many ministries that make up the spiritual life of the church. These ministries variously include Sunday school, youth ministry, cell group ministry, mid-week ministry to children and adults, etc. As churches grow the size, range and complexity of these ministries grow along with them. Long experience has shown that the organizational burden that comes with real growth cannot be borne by the laity alone. In order for churches to grow effectively they need the services of a full time professional pastor. This is why, in accordance with our theory of the Synergistic Church, sustainable growth will only occur in direct proportion to the growth of the Pastorate. It is, therefore, on the basis of the need for the services of the fully trained pastor, who alone is able provide the organizational support for continued growth, we are able to conclude the second professional role of the pastor is that of ministry center of the local church.