

Questions for those seeking a pastoral job in a church...

HOUSING

Who pays the rent?

Is there some place that I must / or must not live?

Am I expected to share a home with others, or does my family have our own living space?

If we share a home, how do we share living costs? Food? Utilities? Who does the cleaning? Cooking? Are there are boundaries? Quiet times? Rooms where kids and their toys should not be?

Am I expected to open my home for ministry? How often? Limits on size? Noise? Relations with neighbors.

FAMILY

Are you hiring 2 workers for one salary? Is my spouse also a ‘minister’ or can they just attend church and work in another job?

What is expected from my children? What kind of schooling is expected for them to attend? Will you pay tuition for them to attend a private school?

Are my children expected to be leaders in the children/youth programs?

Are my children free to choose their own dress and hair styles, choice of friends, hobbies, etc.?

What happens if my kids walk away from the faith?

WORSHIP SERVICE

Am I responsible for the entire service? Music? Prayers? Sermon? If not, who are my team?

If there is a team, am I the leader? Could I chose some of the songs? Or direct them to a ‘better’ song? Or, are the service tasks ‘siloed’ – led by different people who have the authority over their spheres?

Are children of all ages in attendance for the worship service? Is there a children’s message in the service? Who does that?

If there are programs for children during the time of worship – or before or after – who is responsible for them? Do I have oversight over them? Must I train them? What happens if there are no volunteers? Do we cancel kid’s programs? Hire workers from outside the church with church funds?

Do we practice ‘open’ communion, inviting all professing believers to partake? Or is communion ‘fenced’ – administered with warnings? Or ‘closed’ – for church members only? Do all the members know these distinctions and agree?

Am I expected to be present every Sunday? Preach every Sunday?

Are there funds to pay a guest speaker even if I am there to attend and perhaps partially lead the worship service?

Do I have the freedom to choose the preaching plan?

What is the expected time for the sermon? For the entire service?

Are there other events for teaching / fellowship / meeting planned before or after the service?

If there are no other events planned, am I free to plan some? If I plan them, are the members expected to attend? Is my spouse and children expected to attend?

PASTORAL CARE

Does the church practice infant baptism? If not, what is the minimum age for a young person to be baptized? What should the level of their Christian understanding and maturity be to qualify for baptism?

What about baptized members of the church who have walked away from the faith?

Am I expected to visit the members/seekers/visitors? How often?

Am I expected to visit members who are in the hospital? Nursing homes? Home bound? How often?

Is there any kind of discipleship/evangelism program that I should use to equip members?

How open are the members to gathering for prayer, study, fellowship other than Sunday mornings?

Are members open to hosting meetings for fellowship, prayer, study, eating in their homes?

MEMBERSHIP

What is expected of the church members? Frequency of attendance? Tithing? Volunteering? Leading ministry teams?

Must members attend meetings other than worship services – small groups, classes, etc?

When does a member become a non-member? Bad behavior? Lack of attendance? Denial of faith? How much time/effort should be spent trying to bring them back??

Does the church have by laws / constitution? Do the members understand / know it? Do the members adhere to the primacy of Scripture?

What are the issues that can be decided by the pastor alone? Pastor and Council (or other governing bodies)? Congregational vote?

What is the role / boundaries / services of the denomination the church is connected to?

Are there denominational meetings? Dues? Or other expected obligations?

What filter does the local church have to block directives/suggestions from the denomination if the local leaders disapprove of them?

What are the best means for conveying information/decisions/directions to the congregation?

How often does the church have congregational meetings?

Can members of the church vote by proxy?

Is there a prayer meeting? Prayer chain? Is prayer seen as vital in church/members life?

CARE OF THE PASTOR

Who is my pastor? Who looks after my spiritual needs?

What protection is there for me from false accusations and gossip?

Who can the members talk to when they have a complaint against me but are afraid to tell me to my face? Can that person/group be trusted to keep confidences?

Is there provision for me to seek/pay for personal or family counseling?

Is there any Sabbatical built into my contract? Would I be paid during that time?

Is there a book/resource fund for me to keep current?

Are there limits/expectations on how I use my free time? Groups I join? Sports/Hobbies/Extra-circular?

TIME OFF

How many hours a day am I expected to work for the church? Am I free to structure those hours as I think best?

Do I need to be in an office for certain hours/days?

How many days a week must I work? Am I free to choose which days off I prefer?

How many days/weeks of vacation do I have yearly? Am I paid for vacation time?

Do I need to get approval for what I do or where I go on my vacation?

If I go on a mission trip, or lead members on a mission trip, is that considered my vacation time?

SOCIAL ISSUES

Will the church host/perform same sex weddings?

What if a member of ministry leader announces a same sex attraction / partner? What if this happens to one of their young adult children? Or adulterous affair? Fornication? Moving in without marriage? Unwed pregnancy?

In other words, what is the balance of “grace and truth” and where does the church draw the lines?

Does the church have a statement about abortion?

What is the church’s position on inter-church activities? Among ‘evangelicals’? Mainline protestants? Roman Catholics? Churches with authoritative documents/leaders other than Scripture; Jehovah’s Witness, Mormons, Christian Science, Masons?

Do we rent the church facilities to non-Christian groups? Or even Christians who are not members of the church?

Can non-members use the church facilities for weddings? Must the pastor of the church be in charge of the wedding or other ‘outside’ events or can other ‘outsiders’ lead those meetings?

How far do we comply with government demands to continue receiving tax exempt status? What if the government threatened to remove that status if we continued to preach traditional marriage? Warn unbelievers against eternal judgment? Call for holiness of life?

Is there a national flag displayed in the sanctuary? Which country? Why?

These, and other, questions would be good to discuss with church leaders as you contemplate taking on a new ministry assignment. As Jesus advised, “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?” (Luke 14.28 ESV). Be sure to include your family in the consideration of these issues.

Will you find a ministry assignment that perfectly aligns with your opinions? That would be scary! The body of Christ is more wonderful and diverse than our limited thoughts and experiences.

But I pray you will find a ‘home’ where you can trust one another even in differences - where respect and understanding are central; where people are “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4.3 ESV); where people talk face to face before they Facebook it! We will disagree, but we don’t have to be disagreeable. Indeed, through different opinions we learn and grow in maturity.

A realistic goal of your search is to find a set of problems you can live with! Godspeed!

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