

## FULL TIME MINISTRY PEOPLE

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Part two



Strike three! You're out!! Sounds like baseball, but I can tell you - those words seem to apply in peculiar places.

Years ago I was doing tons of outreach in Waterloo. Part of what I did was door to door work. We may debate the merits of that approach today, but we had to start somewhere. Our small congregation was meeting in a school. I was a 27- year-old retired missionary who had been invited to help the church with its outreach. The group had never had a pastor or staff person of any kind so my role was in the developing stages.

As I met people in their homes I heard the following questions repeatedly: · What denomination is your church?· Are you the pastor?· Where is it?

Each of the questions required complex answers that distracted me from my primary purpose for being there. They also raised questions in their minds that most were not ready for.

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Things have changed. We have overcome our hesitancy in using the term *pastor* for those who serve in part-time or full-time leadership roles in the church. And we have certainly found it helpful to use a biblical term our culture understands and relates well to.

But having part-time or full-time people serving with a particular congregation does raise new questions.· What do we expect them to do?· To whom are they accountable?· How will they fit into the existing decision-making processes? With the elders? With the congregation? How will they be supported financially? How much? What about benefits?· How do they get in - or out of these ministry roles?· Will some become spectators because of this new arrangement?

### **Expectations**

As with any discussion there are extremes to avoid: not spelling out expectations clearly enough vs. excessive detail in role expectations. The pastor or staff person should have a clear understanding of what they are expected to do. List general responsibilities and indicate the percentage of anticipated time that should be devoted to each.

It is also helpful to picture what this ministry would look like if God were to bless it abundantly. Build into the role expectations clearly definable goals and flexibility. I believe every full-time ministry person with a specific congregation should have the freedom to devote a portion of their ministry to something outside of the church. It does wonders for their mental health!

### **Accountability**

The pastor or staff person cannot consider everyone in the church as their "boss". In most cases they are responsible to the elders or to someone appointed by them. If the staff person is accountable to a group, only those matters discussed and concluded by the group as a whole should be considered as directives. When members of the group express themselves otherwise, they are only giving their opinion. And it should go without saying that if the person in question

is a pastor or primary leader in the church they should be a regular functioning member of the elders group.

**Fit into decision-making process** The process of decision-making is up for debate in many congregations. Is it the elders who decide? Is it the congregation? Or the church staff? How will each have their appropriate place in decision-making? This question must be addressed biblically and pragmatically in every church. When agreement is reached, write it down. Failure to address this matter is deadly.

### **Financial Support**

Not too much and not too little! Support levels should reflect the average income of the congregation. How support is provided can vary a great deal. Some will have support from their home or commending churches. Others have no such ties. However we arrange the funding, we are living in an era when everyone wants to know how much? Is it legally administered? Will there be benefits? And is the amount appropriate?

### **Spectators vs involvement**

Will those who presently serve in volunteer capacities be reduced to "hewers of wood and drawers of water" if we add ministry staff? They might be. Care should be taken to build an "empowering others element" into the role expectations of the staff person. Without this ingredient we may simply be "hiring someone to work while we watch". What a tragedy!

### **Transitions**

When a congregation decides to bring someone on board in a part-time or full-time capacity or release someone from such a role they must do so with care and integrity. This is an issue of such importance we will devote this entire column to it in the next issue of Thinking Ahead.

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