

What Does A Minister Do? (Author Unknown)

Each church's job description will vary slightly, according to the needs of the congregation and the custom of the church, but basically all church ministers or ministry teams perform pretty much the same services.

Misunderstandings can occur when members are only familiar with those ministerial responsibilities which are highly visible – such as leading the Sunday Service, conducting special services, spending time in the office handling the administrative work, teaching classes, attending board meetings, etc. Those visible services are really only a small portion of the work of the church minister. Sharing the timing and the details that comprise the rest of a minister's responsibilities is often complicated by the fact that so much of what a minister does is confidential and cannot be discussed.

Let's suppose that you have a ministry with 150 people attending Sunday Services, about the number of people that supposedly can be effectively guided by a single minister. The number of congregants that the minister serves, however, is more like 225 people – because everyone does not come to church every Sunday. Each of them, however, is a real congregant – your church is also their church – and each of them considers your minister to be their minister, also.

Generally, in the course of a single week, the minister is called on to serve directly about 10% of the church population. (Some weeks it may be 2% and some 20%, but on an average, it is 10%). Suppose that each of those 22 people required the minister's time for counseling, or they are getting married, or they or a family member dies or is dying, or they are fired, give birth, go to the hospital, lose their driver's license, their family wants to have them declared incompetent and put them in a nursing home, etc. Some people asking for ministerial help will only require a 20-minute visit with the minister – others may need multiple visits for several hours at a time – but the average time the minister spends with any one congregant at any one time is about one hour.

This same size church requires at least 25 hours of administrative supervision by the minister each week, preparing for and attending meetings, supervising staff and volunteers, planning church programs, checking the books, meeting with board members, tending to the care of the building and grounds – (vehicles too, if there are any) – supervising the filing of insurance claims, the selection of vendors, the application for various licenses, the filing of monthly and quarterly tax forms, meeting with the accountant, etc.

So far, we have accounted for 42 hours of the minister's time in one week. He or she has not yet written the first letter, read the first directive, made the first phone call, attended the first committee meeting, made the first community contact, mitigated the first argument or dispute, prepared for or taught the first class, led the first prayer group, spent any time in personal prayer or renewal and most importantly – has not taken the first step toward preparing for the Sunday lesson, a 10-15 hour job in itself before Sunday church even starts.

Because most of the situations a minister faces in a day are very private and entirely confidential, your minister cannot tell you how he or she spends most of his or her time. He or she can't tell you when they go to bail someone out of jail or accompany them to court or act as character witnesses in their divorce or child custody trials. He or she can't tell you that after a given amount of counseling with a

congregant, time had to be spent guiding that person to further help with a psychologist or a psychiatrist or a mental institution. Your minister can't tell you when time is spent helping a congregant who has been raped or stalked or beaten. He or she can't tell you when a congregant's son got drunk, ran up the ramp of the freeway the wrong way and killed two people or when another board member's 15-year-old daughter became pregnant with a child of a married man.

A minister has to go, sometimes, from a funeral in a morning of a person he knew and loved to the wedding in the afternoon of the granddaughter of a congregant he hardly knows and be properly emotionally centered in each of those situations. He or she must also be compassionate with the congregant who is genuinely distressed because the board decided to redecorate the church and, in the process, moved a picture donated by her grandmother that had hung in the same spot for the past twenty years.

It is suggested that each member take some quiet time and think about a time that they or someone they know well, really needed the help of their minister. Having access to someone who is spiritually centered to be with you and your family in time of crisis is important – it is the reason people want to have a minister in their life at all. In many cases, the minister is called before anyone else.

Ministers are professional people who have dedicated their lives – every day – all day – to serving others. Ministry is a full-time job. It is important to the work of the church that your minister has sufficient time off, at his or her discretion, to pursue physical and spiritual renewal. It is important to the church that the minister attends regional and national conferences as well as other training programs to ensure that the minister stays in top form for this highly intensive job – familiar with the newest and best techniques available for helping people work their way through their life experiences.

Our church is operating under Bylaws recommended by Unity Worldwide Ministries, which states that a minister is hired to be both its spiritual and the administrative leader. Each of those responsibilities takes considerable time, experience, and competence to accomplish. Because of the complex nature and the variety of duties of a leader with both of those responsibilities, your minister must be able to spend his or her time, entirely at his or her discretion to successfully accomplish both of those tasks. A minister cannot agree to any kind of fixed schedule because there is nothing fixed about the duties of a minister. People do not get sick, die, give birth, or threaten suicide only during office hours. The minister must be able to decide what his or her priorities are – professional and personal – at any given time and perform them according to his or her ability and conscience. As long as the church is being well managed and the congregants are being well served, then the church must be, not only satisfied, but also grateful that competent, dedicated ministers exist.

It is especially incumbent on all members to support the minister to whom they have entrusted the leadership of the church. A harmonious relationship between the board and the minister is essential to the well-being of the church. Before entering into a contract, both parties to the contract – the minister and the board are each well advised to spend considerable time in prayer. God knows with absolute certainty, who the right and perfect minister is for your church and God also knows which church is the right and perfect church for each minister.