

“So You Are the New Pastor!”
(Guidelines for a New Pastor Coming into a Church)
by Rev. David J. Bauer

Do's:

1. Study carefully the church constitution and especially the doctrinal statement before accepting the call to come as pastor.
2. Spend your first year reading all board meeting minutes on record starting back in the early days of the church, if they are available. Learn about the roots of the church, how it started, previous pastors, etc.
3. If you must moderate the church board and business meetings, buy a copy of “Robert's Rules of Order”, study and use it to maintain a sense of order and parliamentary procedure at all business meetings. Plan to keep business meeting time down to no more than an hour's length. (It can be done!)
4. Spend the first year meeting all the neighbors within a large radius of the church. Within ½ to a mile in the city church; Within 10 miles or more in the country church. You can only be the new pastor for the first year. Ring doorbells, bring introductory literature and offer to pray for each family with their permission. Make the visit short. Look neat and clean. Smile and give a firm handshake. You will only get one chance at a first impression.
5. Make it a point the first year, to visit all church members, shut ins, and even those in erratic attendance. Invite board members' families to your home for dinner if possible. Get to know their personalities, hobbies, family needs, etc.
6. Note who the leaders on the church board really are. Watch the direction the heads turn when a motion is proposed at a board meeting. If the church has staff, including a secretary get to know them especially.
7. Identify who the church patriarchs or matriarchs are. There are people in every small congregation who have been there since the foundation was laid, or so it seems. They can be good people and very helpful; they can also be folks holding the church back from growth to the next level. Try to befriend them and learn as much as possible from them.
8. Learn as much as you can about the missionaries your church supports. What are their countries where they minister, support levels, special needs, what type of work they do, etc. Make a firm commitment with the board and people that under your leadership this church will be a missions centered church, as God enables.
9. Attend town or village board meetings. Get to know the mayor, police chief, fire chief, building inspector and the town board members.
10. Offer to work with the police department and firehouse as a chaplain on call if they do not have one already. Demonstrate your support of these brave men and women.
11. Get haircuts in the local barber shop or beauty salon, where you can hear the latest talk about events in the neighborhood. Make your presence known there.

12. Live in the same neighborhood as the church and as close to the church as possible. Remember that God became flesh and moved into our neighborhood so we could know Him. –John 1:14

13. Attend local school functions, especially PTA and school board meetings. Get to know the superintendent, school principal by name.

14. Make arrangements to talk with the previous pastor. Is he still in the neighborhood? Is he retired or disabled? Will he be attending church where you are the pastor? What kind of a leader was he? Much can be learned from conversations with him.

15. Add to the church. Concentrate on evangelism of the lost as they are ready, have an ongoing “new believers” class, baptize as many as are willing, and keep the new church membership classes ongoing. Assimilate as many new people into the church as you can the first year. If we are not adding at least 15-20% to our church annually we may be decreasing in attendance in our church.

16. Find one potential leader that you can personally disciple and work with for a year, with the idea of possibly adding a new mix to the board for year two.

Don't's:

1. Do **not** spend the first year revising the church constitution, even if the board or people indicate that they would like to see it revised.

2. Make **no** major changes the first two years in anything in the church, unless it is an emergency matter. Make changes carefully, prayerfully and slowly after this time.

3. Do **not** talk negatively about the previous pastor. Emphasize his strengths and the goals he was working toward. Always remember, you will someday be the “*previous pastor.*”

4. Do **not** use board meeting time for extensive Bible studies. Read a selected portion of Scripture, open in prayer and get the business done.

5. Do **not** show up at a business meeting without a written agenda. The goal should be to keep meetings within one hour's length.

6. Do **not** do battle over every issue or difference of opinion. Choose your battles carefully, as they may determine your health and tenure for many years. Instead, build up credibility of character and spiritual maturity. Differences of opinion are usually not life and death matters. Do not bring trivial matters before the church. Keep problems at their smallest possible level.



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P.O. Box 272 Hinsdale, Illinois 60522-0272
708-579-3800 or 708-579-3801 - djbauer1@juno.com