



THE PASTOR'S PEN

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Every now and again I come across an article that just stands out and needs to be shared in its own words without any editing or extended commentary. The following is one such article about the future of the Church. I recently shared with the Board the fact that Ministers are no longer being held up in our society as people of respect and integrity like they were in the 70's and 80's. In some poles, ministers are finding that they are being placed on the same level as used car salesmen and infomercial pitchmen.

So if the minister is not seen as a figure of authority or integrity in today's society, how does a congregation make a positive impact in their community? They make that impact by acting like disciples and reaching out in the name of Christ to the world around them. The Christian Church has always emphasized the priesthood of all believers and the fact we do not have a clergy. That has been a central doctrine of the Restoration Movement since it was founded. In this area we Disciples have been ahead of the mainstream denominations. Now we have the opportunity to be the leaders needed to help evangelize and carry on the work of the Church into the twenty-first century. Are you ready to take up the challenge?

Sometimes Pastors Need to Get out of the Way

By [Allan Bevere](#):

Churches may have pastors, but the ministries of the church must be and should be lay-driven. The huge downside to the professionalization of the ministry is that too many pastors believe they have to do ministry for everyone in the church, while too many laity believe the same thing. When the pastor does everything it leads to an exhausted pastor, over-fed and out-of-shape laity, and a church that is neglectful of its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Yes, the pastor needs to provide leadership to be sure, but sometimes the best thing a pastor can do to foster new ministry in the church is to simply get out of the way and let the laity run with their vision and allow them do what they have a passion for. Over my years as a pastor, I have seen more new and vital ministries start by following seven simple principles:

- 1) If the new ministry is in keeping with church's mission statement, it does not need to be approved by the church board. Do not bog down new ideas in committees and endless debate that just foster discouragement. A church does not need to vote on everything; if competent and trustworthy lay leadership is in place, things will happen and the slow-moving turtle of ecclesiastical democracy and red tape can be saved for such decisions as new construction and Sunday morning schedule changes.
- 2) Any person who suggests a new program or mission is responsible for implementing it. It is amazing how many people in the church come up with wonderful new ideas that simply make more work for others.
- 3) To quote United Methodist church consultant, Doug Anderson, "the doers decide." Armchair

quarterbacks are not allowed in the church. Too often people who desire nothing more than to sit on the sidelines want to have their say and direct how things should be done while others put in their time, energy, and commitment. I have actually had people approach me on various occasions over the years telling me and others in leadership on something that should be done, but in the same breath say, "But I'm too busy to help." Those who have "skin in the game" get to make the decisions and decide on the course of a ministry they have committed themselves to seeing through. Those who choose to be bench warmers can remain in the seated position in silence.

4) The pastor and the paid staff are there to provide ancillary support, but other than that, they should get out of the way so that people can pursue their passion.

5) Pastors should allow people to plug themselves in where they are passionate. Burnout in the church happens not so often from people doing too much, but from people who are doing things they have no desire to do. It is better to leave a job undone than to push someone into it making everyone unhappy.

6) While the pastor needs to let the laity drive the mission, she must also encourage, encourage, and encourage. Things seldom go exactly as planned in the church. Becoming discouraged is an ever-present reality. Pastors need to be cheerleaders offering their support. They need to write thank you notes and give verbal thanks to those who have committed themselves to the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ in the world.

7) Pray, pray, pray, and pray. Need I say more?

It is amazing what God can do with people who are passionate for a particular ministry; it is amazing what God can do when the pastor simply gets out of the way.

What are your thoughts on this? This is the future of the Church. The funny thing is, it is the same way the Church was run back in the first century. A wise man once said: "The more that things change, the more they stay the same." That statement has never been more true in the Church than it is right now. So step up and take your place. As a disciple you have a calling and a ministry. God provides the power and we supply the hands. Where we go as a congregation and what we accomplish is up to you.

Encouraging disciples to serve,

James