

**Reflections on the Role of a Pastor**  
**by Pastor John Wertz, Jr.**  
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I do not have a job description. I have a Letter of Call which offers a general description of the ministry that the congregation has called me to do. The Letter of Call focuses on areas like preaching, sacramental leadership, worship leadership, pastoral care, lifting up the concerns of those in need, equipping others for service and sharing God's love through word and deed.

One of the joys and challenges of being a pastor is that each day presents new opportunities for ministry and quite often, no two days or two weeks are the same. My week normally has a pattern. Typically, I lead worship and teach an adult class on Sunday mornings. I lead a Bible study and go to choir practice on Tuesdays. I write a sermon and prepare to teach my Sunday School class on Thursdays and Fridays. During the week, I make visits in the afternoons, go to ministry meetings in the evenings, oversee the business of the congregation in the mornings, coordinate with paid and volunteer staff at times convenient for them and engage in my own personal devotion and study. Add a funeral, hospital visitation, service project, a member or family experiencing a crisis, and/or synod event into the mix, and the entire structure of my week changes significantly. Seasons of the church year such as Lent and Christmas, require extra time for planning, preparation and services.

No pastor or congregation can be all things to all people, but thankfully as the Apostle Paul reminds us, "there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). Pastoral ministry, at its best, is a partnership between God, God's people in a particular place and a pastor. Each pastor has a unique set of gifts, competencies and passions and each congregation has an equally unique set of gifts, competencies, passions and mission opportunities. I believe that the key to creating a whole, healthy ministry is discovering and focusing on the ministries about which the pastor and the congregation are passionate and gifted. If you have a pastor who loves senior adults and a congregation full of seniors, then don't try to start a youth group. Build a healthy senior adult ministry. If you invest time discovering your gifts, strengths and competencies, you will be able to begin to describe the ministry both the congregation and the pastor hope to accomplish and together you can then create a matrix by which to measure progress.

***A word of caution about realistic expectations***

Each person in a congregation has a set of expectations for their pastor. Many times, the congregations expectations are a compilation of all of these expectations added together, The result is that congregations expect pastors to be skilled worship leaders with inspiring sermons each Sunday, expert educators, compassionate caregivers, proficient small business administrators, fund-raisers, youth ministry specialists even when no youth are in the congregation, and public relations professionals while at the same time pleasing everyone. Pastors can be just as unrealistic. They expect members in congregations to be at least as pious

as he or she is. They think that members should be keenly interested in reaching the unchurched, amazingly generous, conflict free and totally devoted to the church.

Neither set of expectations is realistic. Most pastors will bring a high degree of competency in one or two areas of ministry, a reasonable degree of competency in one to two other areas of ministry and very little competency in some areas of ministry. Most congregations are filled with ordinary people who come to church looking to share and receive community, compassion and hope. One way of looking at realistic and unrealistic expectations is to divide a sheet of paper into two columns. In one column put the expectations of what a pastor or congregation is to do and in the other column put the expectations of what the pastor or congregation is **not** to do. This can provide a concrete way for all parties involved to get a handle on the expectations. To me, a better way forward is to develop a shared vision for mission and then agree upon one or two ministry goals to be accomplished over the next year. I believe this approach is the healthiest and most effective way to undertake the ministry God is calling pastors and congregations to do.

When starting a call process, invest time in discovering the gifts of your congregation. An honest assessment of the ministry those gifts will allow you to accomplish will help you grow forward as a congregation. Don't worry about what you think you are 'supposed' to do as a church, discover what God has gifted you to do, then look for a pastoral leader who has the gifts to help you build on your strengths and develop new strengths in the years to come.

*updated January 11, 2011*