Lay Pastor

A ministry description for local church leaders

Introduction

God asks the church to be a community of people sharing a common purpose and fellowship, continually growing in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. Paul describes the church as "his body, the fullness of him who filleth every thing in every way" (Eph. 1:22).

God calls us into His body for the purpose of establishing a saving relationship with Him and community with one another. The Holy Spirit convicts our minds, leads us to repentance, and plants us within the church.

You experience the presence of Jesus Christ in the world within your church; the world experiences the living presence of Jesus Christ as it witnesses your church. When a local church serves the world it is an expression of the love of Christ to the world. It is the body of Christ serving the world's needs and being used by the Spirit as an agency of salvation. Thus, the church is a servant body. Created for service, it serves the Lord in praise, serves one another in love, and serves the world in humility. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

God calls every member of the church into ministry. The church is a kingdom of priests set free to minister effectively for Christ. Our priesthood is to each other within the church and to the world. A lay pastor is a ministering servant of God, and, like every Christian, is called to ministry, gifted by the Holy Spirit, and in baptism ordained for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12).

God supplies each person in the church with the resources for ministry—scripture, spiritual power, God's character, and spiritual gifts. A lay pastor is equipped for his or her ministry by the gifts received from the Holy Spirit.

Duties of the Lay Pastor

Although the program may be different in your conference, the ministry to which a person is called when he or she becomes a lay pastor can best be described in the following ways:

1. **Teamwork**. Lay pastors work under the supervision of a senior pastor or district leader, and they must work closely with the local church board and officers. It is important to keep in mind that a "lone ranger" style of leadership will only create problems and not build up the congregation. You must arrange to meet weekly, or at least every second week, with your supervisor for good, one-on-one communication. Only in this way will you ensure that you are supporting one another and working together.
2. **Preaching and worship leadership**. A primary responsibility of the lay pastor is to fill the pulpit, perhaps three out of four Sabbaths. This includes attention to the entire worship service, not just the sermon. The elders are the worship committee in small churches, and it is essential that you work with them in helping them to become co-

leaders of worship with you. Any changes in the order of service need to be voted by the elders.

3. **Visitation**. You cannot do an adequate job of preaching unless you have regular contact with the congregation in their homes and places of work. The lay pastor is usually expected to systematically visit the church members, give Bible studies to interested persons, and make contact with all Sabbath visitors. You need to clarify with your senior pastor and the church board their expectations regarding visits to the sick, funerals and referrals for pastoral counseling.

4. **Midweek meetings**. You should plan to conduct a prayer meeting, a Bible study group, seminars such as the Daniel Seminar, Revelation Seminar, or a lay training class one evening a week, with the possible exception of the weeks the church board meets. This is a vital part of a healthy, growing church. In many churches today there is no longer one general midweek meeting, but a number of home Bible fellowships and seminars offered on different days in various locations. This allows for maximum attendance and the meeting of a wider range of needs.

5. **Planning**. Every congregation needs to have a yearly plan for church growth to ensure an ongoing, balanced program of outreach, soul-winning and nurture. The process by which these plans are developed is as important as the actual plan. If the church leaders and members do not participate in planning, they will not likely support the plans. Support and church growth take place when the church board or church ministries council has a planning council each year, and then presents the plan to a general church business meeting along with the church budget. Will it be your responsibility to act as facilitator for this process, or will your senior pastor lead out?

Resource Materials

The following resources are recommended for your ministry. You can purchase these by calling AdventSource (800-328-0525), the Adventist Book Center (800-765-6955) or your local Christian bookstore.

Adventist Mission in the 21st Century, ed. by Jon Dybdahl. Subtitled “Presenting Jesus to a Diverse World,” this book asks some serious questions: What have we accomplished? What challenges remain? What are we doing to finish the work? What works and what doesn’t?

Blinded by the Light, by Phil Dunham with Maylan Schurch. The author presents seven steps to apostasy, 16 questions for evaluating independent ministries, 11 ways to deal with liberal teachers in the church, seven mistakes made by breakaway congregations, and 10 statements by “new light” teachers that should serve as early warning signals.

Common Sense Ministry, by James Cress. A blueprint for successful pastoral leadership.

Community of Faith, by Russell Staples. The author explores the biblical and theological background for our understanding of the church and its role in today’s world.

Experiencing the Power of His Word, by David Marshall. The author examines the central purpose of the Bible, looks at its human authors, discusses biblical inspiration and God’s role in the Bible’s authorship, describes how the books of the Bible were gathered together, and tells the exciting story of how manuscript discoveries in the last 150 years demonstrate the authenticity and accuracy of the Book of Books.

Great Stories and How to Tell Them, by Steven Mosley. Explains how to take profound biblical truths and crystallize them in narrative form; includes a collection of heart-gripping stories which illustrate each of the 27 fundamental beliefs.
Heralds of God's Word, by Mike Strickland. A lay preaching seminar.
How to Preach by Steven P. Vitrano, is a short, practical volume specifically designed to assist lay preachers in the planning, preparation and delivery of Sabbath sermons.
Ministries Handbook, Ministerial Department.
Pastoral Ministry, Compilation from the writings of Ellen G. White.
Radical Disciples for Revolutionary Churches, by Russell Burrill. The author explores what it takes to produce church members who want to be participants, not spectators, and proposes a major change in how to "do evangelism."
Rekindling a Lost Passion: Recreating a Church Planting Movement, by Russell Burrill. The author supplies the nuts and bolts of planting new churches and issues an urgent call to recapture that same passion for the lost that Christ has.
Revolution in the Church, by Russell Burrill. Believing that both pastors and laity have strayed far from their biblically assigned roles, the author proposes a radical change in how Adventists "do church."
Revolutionized Church of the 21st Century, by Russell Burrill. Experience the explosive power of a church built on relationships.
Search for Certainty Bible Study Guides, by Mark Finley. Presents traditional Adventist doctrines in a clear, carefully reasoned, faith-building way—30 lessons in a set, available by the set or in packs of 100 per title. (It Is Written)
Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual and the Manual for Ministers.
So You've Been Asked to Speak, A practical guide to public speaking.
Studying Together, by Mark Finley. This ready-reference Bible handbook assists you in studying Christ-centered truths with friends and neighbors.
Success Secrets for Pastors, by John Rhodes. Learn the roles: administrator, preacher, shepherd and promoter.

Visit AdventSource On-Line at www.adventsource.org for a complete list of the latest resources available for local church leaders. You can place an order or request a catalog by calling 1-800-328-0525.
For information about additional resources and answers to your questions call the Adventist Plusline at 1-800-732-7587 or visit them on-line at www.plusline.org.