

What It Means To Call A Part Time Pastor

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Ministry is a calling, and the call to serve a congregation or institution in the role of pastor is a sacred one, upheld by scripture and ordained by God. Yet all ministers are human beings, and thus warrant careful attention to expectations, work load, and compensation that all other persons deserve.

ALL the key decision makers, staff, and search committee need to decide honestly and with consensus the number of hours per week the pastor is expected to be serving in ministry and available to the congregation. If the job description and compensation is created by a Search Committee or Pastoral Relations Committee, it needs to be completely understood and supported by the Board and, if possible, by the entire congregation.

While it is understood that ministry is a divine calling and this calling encompasses one's entire being, it is nonetheless critical to recognize ministers as human and deserving the respect of honoring her or his time commitment. Of course, all ministers know that we are ultimately accountable to God 24/7/365 and that when a crisis arises, we are to respond. But ministers have bills to pay and responsibilities to family members. Many part-time ministers will need to find other employment to fill out their salary requirements. Therefore, the congregational leaders should understand the "hours" of a pastor need to be commensurate with their compensation.

Forty hours a week is full time.

Thirty hours a week is $\frac{3}{4}$ time.

Twenty-six/seven hours a week is $\frac{2}{3}$ time.

Twenty hours a week is $\frac{1}{2}$ time.

These include Sunday responsibility (yes, worship is *work* for pastors!) as well as sermon preparation time.

It is also important to recognize that if you are seeking to be a growing congregation, the paradigm of having a pastor sitting in the church office "waiting" for people to show up will not help the church to grow. If one of the expectations of members is the pastor will be sitting at her or his desk any time I drop by the church, you will severely limit that pastor's ability to transform the congregation and engage new generations of faithful followers of Christ.

In addition to considering the position of pastor by the number of hours worked, it is even more helpful to think in terms of expected outcomes. What ministry do you expect the pastor to fulfill that cannot be offered by lay leaders? Consideration also needs to be given to the needs of the pastor's family, other employment responsibilities, as well as travel time.

Full Time Pastor

A full-time pastor would generally be able to provide:

- **Preaching and leading worship** (all Sundays, except for vacation and special occasions when the pastor invites a guest preacher)
- **Pastoral care** (both hospital visitation as well as home visitation, in addition to weddings and funerals)

- **Christian Education** (leading a Bible Study, teaching Sunday School, or working with children and youth)
- **Leadership Development** (training newly elected officers, leading Elder and Deacon training)
- **Administration** (moderating board meetings, working with other church committees, general paperwork/correspondence, attending Regional and Denominational meetings, serving on Regional committees, attending local ministerial association functions)
- **Evangelism** (creating and implementing strategies for growth, following up with visitors, promoting the church through social media)
- **Community connections** (attending community meetings, working with neighborhood groups, promoting social justice causes)
- On top of that would be time for **personal growth, study, and prayer**. There is also time spent writing a sermon and preparing for worship as well as preparing to teach Sunday School or lead a Bible study or working with children and youth or leading a Board meeting or a committee meeting.

Even in a full time position some choices would need to be made as no one person would have time to do all of this. There would always be more to do. But, it is reasonable to expect all of these areas to be covered by a full-time pastor.

Part-Time Pastor:

For part-time positions the responsibilities of the pastor as well as their work schedule will need to be negotiated between the pastor and the Board (with the advice and counsel of the Pastoral Relations Committee) recognizing the need for flexibility.

Tough Questions In Preparing A Part-Time Job Description:

Some decisions to be made/questions to ask as you write the job description for a part time pastor:

The part time pastor will:

Preach and be present in worship X out of 4 Sundays a month (or X out of five when there is a five-Sunday month) ***If the expectation is that the pastor will be present and preach for the majority of Sundays, then something else in the job description will *have* *to* *go*!***

Attend all? how many? Board Meetings, and Worship Team meetings but will not be expected to attend any other meetings. (Alternatively, what meetings are required and what are not?) You ***cannot*** expect a part time pastor to attend all meetings!!! He or she will, of course, attend all Pastoral Relations Committee Meetings.

Visit members when they are in the hospital but will not be expected to visit family/friends of members nor visitors, nor do home visits. These important pastoral care needs will be covered by the Elders of the congregation. You cannot expect a part-time pastor to do all of the pastoral care needed.

Expected to be "on call" X out of seven days per week, whether this is in the office, in meetings, or doing pastoral visitation.

Be in the church office available for visits X days a week. Please note, growing churches understand that their pastor needs to be out in the community as much as in the church office.

Three-Quarter Time Pastor (about 30 hours a week)

Since a person working 3/4ths time would not be able to accomplish as much – ***and should not be expected to accomplish as much*** – as someone working and being paid to work full-time, some things

would need to be dropped or done by some of the church members. Hopefully board members would be able to pick up some of this work since they have been elected to leadership positions.

A three-quarter time pastor would be able to provide:

- **Preaching and leading worship** (most but not all Sundays)
- **Pastoral Care** (weddings and funerals only for full church members, hospital visitation only for full church members, with very limited home visitation)
- **Christian Education** (Either leading a Bible Study – or - teaching a Sunday School class – or - working with Youth. If two of these three optional expectations are chosen there will be more limitations placed on the time available for pastoral care and administration)
- **Leadership Development** (Training newly elected officers)
- **Administration** (attending board meetings, working with one or two church committees, paperwork/correspondence, attending Regional meetings, and either attending local ministerial association functions – or - serving on a Regional committee)
- **Evangelism** (following up with visitors, promoting the church through social media)
- **Community connections** (attending community meetings)
- On top of that would be time for **personal growth, study, and prayer**. There is also time spent writing a sermon and preparing for worship as well as preparing to teach Sunday School or lead a Bible study or working with children and youth or leading a Board meeting or a committee meeting.

The exact balance of the duties would need to be negotiated according to the needs of the congregation. There also needs to be some recognition that there will be preparation time beyond time in the pulpit or time before a class or a committee meeting.

Half Time Pastor (about 20 hours per week)

A half time position would not be able – and should not be expected - to accomplish as much as someone who is working full time or three quarters time. Again, there will need to be some limitations, not only in terms of time worked **but also in terms of expectations**. In a church being served by a half time position there will be an even greater need for other church members, particularly session members, to take on additional responsibilities.

A half time pastor would be able to provide:

- **Preaching and leading worship** (three Sundays at the most)
- **Limited pastoral care** (weddings and funerals of members and family, and could be shared with other ministers from the Region, some hospital visitation of full members and little, if any, home visitation)
- **Limited Christian Education** (Either leading a Bible Study or teaching Sunday School, but not both)
- **Limited administration** (attending board meetings, no attendance at any other meetings, and paperwork/correspondence, along with attendance at Regional meetings, occasional work with church committees chairpersons, occasional attendance at local church ministerial association functions)
- **Evangelism** (following up with visitors)
- On top of that would be time for **personal growth, study, and prayer**. There is also time spent writing a sermon and preparing for worship as well as preparing to teach Sunday School or lead a Bible study or leading a Board meeting.

Quarter Time Pastor (about 10 hours a week)

There are **severe limitations** to what someone would be able to do in a quarter time position because this involves working perhaps 10-14 hours a week and ***the congregation needs to have a conversation about their expectations of what ministry a pastor with limited time can provide.*** Most of that time would be spent in writing a sermon and preparing for worship. Therefore, the board and the members and Elders of the church will need to take responsibility for the majority of the pastoral care needs of the congregation.

A quarter time pastor would be able to provide:

- **Preaching and leading worship** (three Sundays at the most)
- **Some pastoral care** (weddings and funerals of full members only, but not of non-member family of members, and could be shared with other clergy from the Region. Hospital visits would be done by the Elders of the church.)
- **Some administration** (attending board meetings and paperwork/correspondence)

Pulpit Supply

If a church is unable to afford a quarter time pastor, the reality is that they are only contracting with someone for pulpit supply. That can be done on a per week basis. The beginning compensation rate of the Christian Church in Ohio for Pulpit Supply (including Regional Elders) is \$150 per Sunday **plus** mileage at the current IRS Allowance Rate. This is also the rate for guest ministers for the above $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, and $\frac{1}{4}$ time pastor job descriptions.

Other options for a congregation to consider if they are unable to afford a quarter time pastor would be to share a pastor with a nearby Disciples Of Christ church or to share a pastor with a church belonging to another denomination. It will be wise to challenge church members to greater giving before considering these options.

All of these options need to be done in conversation with your Regional Minister, and with enormous prayer, Bible Study, and discernment.

I hope these reflections help you and your congregation find the best fit for ministry in your setting.

Faithfully Yours,
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