



The Pastor as a Community Leader

Compassionate Ministry Begins in the Local Church

Forces that are often beyond her control define the pastor serving a congregation and a community. Whether you are the Pastor of a mega-church in a large urban environment or secretly meeting in a country where Christianity is a minority religion, the pastor's role demands unique skills and the capacity to adapt. The pastor is the shepherd to the flock counseling, nurturing, teaching and making Christ-like disciples in the nations. Pastors are in a unique position to "forth-tell" the truth and create a voice in their congregation that is heard throughout the community. Communities depend on the work of the pastor and the church to solve the social problems it faces. Expectations are high, both personally and professionally, and the pastor is often supported by only the comfort of one's calling.

Pastors from the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, of which the Church of the Nazarene is one of its largest representatives, preach holiness that transforms individuals and communities. As our theological founders believed, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit compels us to respond:

When we see hate we live and proclaim love; when we see hunger we feed the hungry; when we see the imprisoned we seek redemption and release of the captives; when we see injustice we proclaim the justice of the kingdom, and as we see disease of the spirit and the body we seek the power and the resources to bring healing.

These realities drive us from the security of our facilities into our communities where the power of the gospel brings hope and enacts tangible social change. The denomination affords us a structure in

compassionate ministries that enables us to generate resources to support our work on behalf of the poor and disenfranchised, compassion is the foundation of our faith, and the expression of our holiness identity. Compassion's call is inescapable. It is who we are as a people.

The pastor is the facilitator of compassionate ministries in their congregation and in their community. They are the bridge between a community's needs and the resources of the church.

Many congregations provide:

- Job counseling
- Child development and orphan care
- Food pantry and/or food security
- Literacy programs
- Bi-lingual education
- Immigration counseling
- HIV/AIDS support groups
- Water sanitation and conservation
- Agriculture programs to feed and employ the poor
- Shelters for the homeless

These are samples of the expanding ministries embraced by the church. Considering these great social problems, each pastor has the opportunity to emerge as a community leader at a time when leaders are desperately needed. As a community leader each pastor can fulfill a fundamental mission of the church through serving others and improve the standing and influence of the church in the community.

Below are strategies to enhance the pastor and the church's efforts in serving the community:

1. Discover Community Problems

Learn the social problems that exist in your community. Employ your congregation to research the conditions of your community. Your congregation can conduct informal interviews, community surveys, or professionals can point you to available data. (NCMI can provide samples of community-based surveys designed to assess the assets of each homestead or neighborhood). Areas of inquiry may include substance abuse rates, poverty rates, youth unemployment, prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and access to clean drinking water. Through discovering this information, you and your congregation can increase its effectiveness in serving your community.

2. Discover & Employ Congregation Assets

Discover assets, strengths, and skills of your congregation. The purpose of obtaining this information is to increase your congregation's ability to serve your community. A church in the United States with more than 50 medical professionals is mobilizing this human resource to respond to medical issues locally and globally. In Manzini, Swaziland a congregation with 15 educators is providing tutorial services to children orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The Tabarre Church of the Nazarene in Port-au-Prince, Haiti realized that counseling was needed after the 2010 earthquake. They trained members in social work to begin working with traumatized survivors in their community. These are congregations understanding the composition of their congregation and are mobilizing them accordingly. A simple survey of church members or discussions with church leaders can initiate the process of discovering your congregation's assets.

3. Connect Community Resources

Discover the assets of your community. Learn about the philanthropic organizations that are working in your community and how you can connect individuals in need with these organizations. Perhaps you have seen factories shut down. There is high unemployment and no jobs for youth. Yet, there are universities and colleges in your community that could provide training or re-training of individuals for the information technology sector. Your church could serve as a classroom extension or you could facilitate meetings between companies that are employing and universities that are re-training the labor force. Discover available resources that could be used to meet your community's needs.

4. Engage Community Organizations & Government Officials

You are increasing awareness of your church's work and influencing how social problems are addressed in your community when you become involved with service clubs, community boards, policy-making organizations and government officials. Engage policy and budget discussions related to areas where your church works (i.e. food pantries and homeless shelters, substance abuse and treatment services). The pastor and church members can discuss the same with members of Parliament, local chiefs and community leaders. As a member and stakeholder of a community, you and your church has a right to provide input about health, water, food or employment. Engage your community-based organizations and be sure to provide resources and solutions, not just criticism.

5. Develop Leadership Skills

To grow, you and the leaders of your church must continue your education. Read (books, articles and blogs), attend workshops, develop seminars and enroll in classes. Some

topics to focus your efforts include social work, financial planning, education, leadership, literacy and counseling. Expand your knowledge and that of key members of the church. Your efforts will inspire members of your church, will facilitate your development as a leader in your community, and increase you and your church's ability to serve your community.

6. Invite Community Organizations to your Church

One congregation in the United States had Big Brothers-Big Sisters make a presentation to promote mentoring. Their focus was on children of the incarcerated. A Nazarene congregation in Kenya sponsored a fair where philanthropic organizations presented the services they provided and their need for community volunteers. Other congregations invite local law enforcement and schools in to discuss crime prevention and community-based initiatives to work with young people involved in substance abuse and violence. There are two benefits of this action. First this is a signal to local organizations that your congregation is committed to serve the community where you live and worship. Second, members of your congregation will learn about the issues and organizations that are present in your community.

7. Seek Outside Funding

The benefits of obtaining outside funding are clear, by obtaining additional funding your church will possess additional resources to serve your community. Do not be afraid of public funding. NCMI provides numerous strategies for how to tap public or outside funding in a way that does not jeopardize your ministry or mission. Identify a member of your congregation that can assist you in grant writing or proposal development or contact your Regional Compassionate Ministries Coordinator. Be clear about your need and how you would employ outside funding to expand your ministry. Understand the guidelines and restrictions and be sure you increasing

your skills and capabilities in the case that additional funding is obtained. NCMI can help you with an assessment of capacity building.

8. Develop and Execute a Strategic Plan

A strategic plan explains the goals of a church and how she will obtain these goals. The development of a strategic plan will compel leaders to wrestle with tough issues including the following: how the church should and will serve her community, examine available resources, and discover conditions that are necessary to enact change in the community. The process of developing a plan increases the focus of the church's mission and increases her ability to serve her community. Upon completion of developing a strategic plan it is important to execute your plan with quality and skill. Monitor and evaluate your implementation and then you should tell your story.

9. Advertise Your Work & Accomplishments

Broadcast your accomplishments! This draws attention and resources to the ministry. Contact media - newspapers, television, radio, websites, and social media (Including media within the denomination like Engage magazine, Holiness Today, Transmission, and Out of Africa) to broadcast your successes of your work. Africa Nazarene University negotiated a partnership with three of Kenya's major newspapers and television stations to chronicle their work around youth employment. The agreement is worth over \$850,000 in media equivalency. This contact has the ability to dramatically increase awareness of the church's work, bringing individuals and resources to your church. You can do the same by developing a communication strategy and indentifying an individual in your congregation or congregation may have Media Relations skills. You will be pleasantly surprised how many people could help.

10. Identify & Engage Champions

A champion is someone with: resources or influence that can facilitate meetings for you, guide you in the right direction on a program or policy issue, or introduce you to the right partners and organizations. They can save you much time and effort and increase you and your church's effectiveness in serving the community. A champion may be a political leader, a business leader in your community, or a prominent advocate, someone in your church who can serve as guide or counselor.

Look for champions when you attend community meetings run by mayors, chiefs, members of Parliament, or other community organization leaders. You may find an individual that values the work and ministry of your church. Cultivate a relationship that could become a champion relationship.

Conclusion

We serve a God who incarnated his son in a broken and sinful world. As Pastors we are called to be present in our communities bringing the hope and promise of salvation. This will require additional skills not always taught at our seminaries and Bible colleges. Our congregations reside in communities with complex needs. Whether the pastor lives in rural Brazil or Boston, his community is under economic and social stress, and needs their assistance. We proclaim a gospel that forgives sin and calls us to a life of holiness. That holiness must manifest in a world with desperate needs. A pastor as a community leader has the honor of embodying that message in their community.