

BY IVAN L. WILLIAMS, SR.

Expectations With Honor

And now, friends, we ask you to honor those leaders who work so hard for you, who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you along in your obedience. Overwhelm them with appreciation and love!" (1 Thess. 5:12, 13, Message).¹

A pastor's biblical role and function include having a servant leader's heart, caregiving, and shepherding. Jeremiah 3:15 says, "Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding." That leading includes coaching, equipping, teaching, and preaching (also see Eph. 4:1-16). To serve as a pastor is a beautiful calling and professional vocation with eternal impact.

The layered expectations pastors face in role and function can, however, be fulfilling *and* overwhelming simultaneously. Negotiating and meeting the additional expectations individuals place on pastors can be challenging, especially when they seem arbitrary or mutually exclusive.

Additionally, pastors face a spiritual leader trust deficit. Trust is an attribute no longer freely given to anyone just because they have a church leadership title. Trust costs must be earned through relationships over time while consistently doing ministry. Below are some best-practiced realistic expectations to have of your pastor.

Presence

Pastors can be counted on to be present through the ups and downs of church life. Consider these words in 1 Corinthians 4:2: "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful." As stewards of God's grace, faithfulness is required. Pastors don't underestimate the power of showing up to a meeting or church service. Presence has a powerful spiritual influence on righteousness.

Missional

Since the church is not a club, and the gospel is not exclusive or confined to Christians. Pastors take Christ's instructions seriously, including sharing every one of them with every race, language, tongue, and people. They see the mission to touch and tell the world consists of connecting with everyday people, church and unchurched: those who choose faith, as well as those who have spiritual doubts, question faith, and are skeptical of religion (see Matt. 28:19, 20).

Transparency

Transparency confronts a double life and is the new currency of trust. Pastors should have nothing to hide. It doesn't mean pastors

should betray people's confidence, but they should express an open approach to church ministry, including its business practices. Building a culture of transparency raises credibility and relevance in any organization (see 2 Cor. 4:1, 2).

Collaboration

Practicing an isolated ministry is not what Christ modeled to His followers. He chose 12 people (Luke 6:12-16) to mentor and coach to become "scientists for souls." He sent out 70 disciples (Luke 10:1), two by two. His witness to us was one of collaboration. He showed that working with others was essential to mission accomplishment.

The number of pastors in the North American Division has grown from 51 in 1863 to more than 4,300 today.² Pastoring evokes resilience and the meaning of purpose. You will be amazed by pastors' thematic commitment to the biblical message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, faithful service, and itinerant sacrifice, courage, and perseverance.

As your pastor serves with distinction and meets the expectations of frontline ministry, consider honoring them and appreciating their family this October.

I am grateful for my team here at the division office, which includes Pastors Jose Cortes, Jr., Esther Knott, and Gerardo Oudri; and teammates Desiree Bryant, associate director for Ministerial Spouses, and Sidnee Kilby, administrative assistant.

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² Information from the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research: https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/Other/SDANWorldChurchStatsSummary2021.pdf?_gl=1*1ohqj63*_ga*MTQ50DE0NTQ4Ni4xNjY5NjQ4NjY3*_ga_2VBYH6KEBQ*MTY2OTY0ODY2Ni4xLjEuMTY2OTY0ODY2Ni4xLjAuMA._&_ga=2.38829607.567026332.1669648667-1498145486.1669648667.

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Ivan L. Williams, Sr., is director of the North American Division Ministerial Association.