

The Pastor as a Church Administrator

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THE PASTOR of a church is the chief administrator of its affairs. Other important duties rest within his province, to be sure, but his executive leadership is of vital moment in the local organization. Let us examine the fundamental categories of that executive task as a means of exploring the areas of this intriguing topic.

General Factors

The pastor's administrative function is the logical coordinate of all factors which make up the church organization. It is not that we seek to minimize any other elements of the church structure, for the contrary is the case: we contend that the full content and message of the church's program will be expanded and become more effective if it is solidly based on sound administrative practice and procedure. It is an axiom in the business world that efficient management occupies a place of importance, alongside a sound establishment and adequate financing, in the maintenance of superior standards of operation. The same axiom is no less applicable to the sphere within which the church moves. For further discussion of this point, the reader is referred to the first article of this series in *The Iliff Review*, "An approach to Church Administration," in the Winter, 1947, issue, in which is noted the similarity of organizational requirements in both business and church affairs.

Briefly stated, this principle of management as applied to the church concerns itself with three inclusive areas: policy, program and human relations. The major purpose of religious cultivation by the application of systematic methods and procedures to the three general fields just mentioned. To put it differently for the clarification of our

thesis, the pastor's administrative responsibility deals with the coordination of all human and physical facilities by application of sound executive methods to the end that all individuals may receive a maximum degree of guidance and encouragement in religious understanding.

These are elemental considerations. They apply to each church organization without direct reference to its membership, its staff, inherent pastoral duties, or other peculiar local factors. The basic pattern is invariable; the innumerable varieties of local characteristics do not change that pattern.

In the vast majority of churches, the pastor is the chief executive and has only voluntary aid in conducting the many phases of organizational life. Without specially trained workers upon whom he may place some of the important administrative responsibilities, a primary obligation is that he acquire understanding of procedures and how to utilize them toward one common purpose. Even in larger churches, where pastors often are surrounded by many staff members, basically the same understanding of executive methods is required. The executive emphasis varies with local peculiarities, but an understanding of its method is essential.

Because of his position in the church organization, the pastor must be able to observe the actual component parts of that organization and, by the process of creative imagination based upon acquaintance with methods and techniques, to visualize the range of its total impact. Careful administration of the church's affairs means that the "eyes" of the pastor's mind must be focused continuously and everlastingly upon those two aspects of his organization — what it is doing today through the var-

ious groups, and the trend which will be developed tomorrow out of the underlying moods today's policies and strategies represent.

It is not particularly difficult for most pastors to achieve at least fair success in their relationships in the church groups. Laymen are usually at hand whose efforts may keep those groups in motion, often with little direct leadership by their minister. His chief "tools" are the ability to get along with people, a general understanding of group activities, and a will to guide those activities so that they are in keeping with the church's goals. This first quality of the pastor-executive's mind thus normally presents no serious problem.

The second essential for the church executive, however, involves a profound difficulty. In the group of church leaders within which he works he possesses probably the largest individual understanding of general denominational interests and emphases by the very nature of his contact with leaders of other churches, denominational offices, and the specialized literature he receives. Furthermore, his entree into most groups around him provides an opportunity of acquaintance with their programs to a degree unmatched by any other person. There lurks the danger.

The very fact that his labors bring him into the "grass roots" activities of the many groups in and beyond his church exposes him to the insidious temptation to regard those particular activities as the end and goal of his church, and he may tend to lose sight of the deeply running currents and trends which must have his direct consideration and guidance. In his earnest and commendable desire to cultivate friendly relations with his congregation and to acquaint himself with church groups, he risks disturbing the normal balance and sequence of sound organization. The result is neglect of the long-range view. Sometimes this leads into an activities-centered church whose

many separate activities may or may not be coordinated toward the church's supreme objective. Perhaps there develops unharmonious human relationships because the fundamental wills of the people have not been united in one over-all program within which they discern their respective places of specific service. In such a case, the church may cease to be an amalgamation of efforts and may become simply an assortment of activities.

The pastor's executive commission thus rests upon a solid foundation. His position is the logical focus of administrative affairs. Few individuals beyond the group of professional church leaders are so equipped in training in those affairs, although many possess remarkable insight into the process and program of the church. Actually, most churches assume that their pastors are the administrators of their programs and personnel, subject only to certain checks and augmentation applied by the laymen themselves.

With this principle before us, we turn to an investigation of the three general realms of pastor-executive responsibility. These intrinsic ingredients within the organization comprise the organism from which proceeds the evaluations and decisions pertaining to property and equipment, records, finances, public relations, membership matters, and all other details of its operation.

Administering Church Policy

An organization may be thought of as a body. Its policies are the sinew and muscle which hold the church body together, and people are the hand and fingers which are activated by the sinew and muscle. This concept was developed in another article in this periodical—"Authority, Policy and Function in the Local Church," in the Spring, 1947, issue—to which reference is made for its detailed implications.

Every activity of an organization rests upon some definition or conclusion of what that activity may or should be.

Sometimes formal action is taken by the official church body to define some responsibility or to plan some program. In addition, many activities take place within a church which are the result of inferences from established policies. Theoretically any person, whether or not he is an official, who makes a decision affecting in some way the church organization itself is thereby affecting its policies.

It follows that each church organization actually operates under a set of policies—whether or not they are duly set up and administered or are casually and spontaneously in force—which are the result of careful consideration by a democratically empowered group or are pronounced by arbitrary individual judgment, and are in keeping with the general trend of the church's program or represent an attitude of temporization. The exact method of policy determination a church employs, it is evident, is a matter deserving of careful thought.

Policies within an organization are simply a device by which official determination of action and attitude within the general areas of operation are defined and standardized. Such official action and attitude are then recorded and responsibility for its maintenance is delegated, so that often there is no necessity for referring each successive situation back to the official body for its decision and action. So conceived, a solid policy structure within a church organization facilitates smooth operation, maintenance of goals and objectives, and maximum service with minimum ineffectiveness.

If we accept the principle that the purpose of policies in a church is to make possible a program of service and education in religion, we at once recognize that there is great value in stating those policies occasionally. Of course the workaday activities of the church tend to radiate from them, but they do not necessarily follow the exact pat-

terns they prescribe. Organizational activities tend to follow the path of least resistance, due chiefly to the ever-present temptation to temporize.

There is a significant effect upon the church when it reminds itself of its basic attitudes. The irksome little confusions over policy are reduced in number and reaction, for the over-all pattern is clearer. A larger number of people know more about why they are in the church. Decisive and incisive thought, decision and action are more nearly possible on the part of the persons in authority and leadership. The sum-total of the church's program is more effective since its various groups are flowing more nearly together in the main channel rather than straying off into their own respective little rivulets.

In actual practice, we realize, the church's official body does not determine every policy which the organization at large follows. Yet, its major occupation certainly includes the setting up and maintaining of all basic and underlying policies, as well as many of the internal and administrative attitudes which are to be executed by others. At that point is the origin of authority which is vested in the leaders of the organization's various groups.

The pastor is one of the church's leaders to whom certain authority is officially allocated. That he should take his place along with the other leaders in policy matters is assumed, but it is not his prerogative to press for authority beyond that allocation. There is sound wisdom in the principle that the pastor is, in a real sense, a creature of the official group and therefore should not seek or accept jurisdiction which might place him in a position in any way superior to that occupied by the creating body. It is not fair either to pastor or church for him or, for that matter, any one individual to be vested with such power as makes it possible for him actually and definitely to determine or administer policies of a fun-

damental character without close official collaboration.

As we view the pastor's place in these technical areas, there are three major duties which circumscribe his relations to church policy.

First, he should take part in the establishment and modification of basic policies to cover all phases of his church organization. This implies his access to complete data and evidence—records of official actions and policy determinations, records of finances and property matters, personnel, and so forth. His most valuable contribution to the process of policy determination is in submitting observations and suggestions from his unique vantage-point as pastor, and this is more readily possible if his information is reinforced with statistical, graphic, pertinent facts. He alone is in a position favorable to careful and thorough assimilation of them. Let him present those facts and then largely assume that the intelligence of other policy-makers in the matter will result in wise decisions. It seems most difficult to justify the judgment that the pastor has a right persistently to argue over policy problems with his officials in regular meeting. Their continuous leadership in the midst of pastors' comings and goings is an asset each must appreciate and utilize. With the facts before them, let him be content to express his views and leave the decision in their hands. So many factors favor this approach that it is perplexing to observe occasional denial of its validity.

Second, the pastor will assume all responsibility which is delegated to him by the policy of his church organization. Once again, we face the logical force of the principle that the pastor's place in that organization is often the key to its effective functioning. If he does not assume the responsibilities which are delegated to him, how will they be discharged? If he fails to follow through with the decisions of his official group—even if at times they disagree

with his own judgment—can he assume that other leaders nevertheless will conscientiously carry out their respective assignments? In other words, once official policy has been prescribed, all church leaders responsible for its maintenance must assume that responsibility. That is the democratic principle at work. It is basic to successful organizational process. A church leader who interfered with its normal working courts personal disrepute.

Admittedly this situation presents certain difficulties and confusions, for ill-defined and inherently elusive responsibilities usually fall to the pastor's lot because sometimes he is presumed to be a master of many skills and abilities, and sometimes other leaders fail to accept the full implications of their respective duties.

At this point the pastor can render a valued service. He is often tempted to assume those duties which are not specifically assigned to others, and to accept labors which are neglected through default by the person to whom they were assigned. There can be no absolute rule, surely, for specific factors defy absolute prognosis. The pastor's general attitude at such times, however, may follow certain constructive propositions: that one of his major duties is to recruit and train leaders, that a person who may neglect or ignore certain important areas of his duties may be a potentially excellent leader with proper guidance, that a rethinking of the range of those responsibilities is indicated whereby either they may be tailored more to the individual personality or shared by another worker, that "supporting characters" in the area of those duties may be at fault in failing to cooperate with the worker, or that apparent situations are seen in a different light once they are scrutinized. Surely one of the basic faults in relationships with people is casual analysis of a situation with resulting oversimplification of prognosis and remedy or

relief.

Third, the pastor will be alert to changing needs and conditions and to areas of the organization where the present policy structure is inadequate or requires modification. The leadership he may provide in this matter is invaluable to the organization for, no other leader may have access to the perspective he has acquired through training and experience. Adequate policy coverage is excellent insurance against most of the church's internal grievances and disturbances. Without such protection some dire results are inevitable. Church members and pastors are sometimes at fault, for example, in desiring certain personal privileges within the organization, and unless a policy is already established at the point a personal issue may be created when the official body has to consider action regarding those privileges. Such seemingly minor details as the borrowing of church equipment or furnishings thus may be magnified far out of proportion to their actual importance if the matter becomes an issue. The solution? Policies should be in effect to cover such situations.

This raises a question. What principles may be applied in trying to determine the scope of policies? There are several criteria which merit inclusion here: (1) All fundamental areas of the organization must be supported with established policies—property and equipment, finances, personnel, and so forth; (2) recurring situations, regardless of their apparent unimportance, should be resolved by policy; (3) especial attention must be given peculiar local conditions so that the church assumes a proper attitude toward them, in the light of its service function, and then maintains that attitude consistently; (4) each adjustment and expansion of the church program may require corresponding change or addition in policy; and (5) constant vigilance in adequate policy coverage is vital.

One of the consequences of inadequate policy machinery in an organization is the gradual but steady expropriation of authority, by a person or a group, which becomes a malignancy when there is too much room for personal choice or decision in fundamental affairs. A good way to avoid such a possibility is to keep the authority where it belongs—in the official group itself. The method of achieving that ideal state is to reserve all important policy considerations for the official group. In this connection, it becomes one of the pastor's solemn duties to be alert to the seemingly innocent and secondary factors in a given situation which may be of far more than passing concern and thus require official consideration.

This discussion is at the core of church organization. The root of many church problems is apparent within the general scope of policy determination and the pastor's leadership therein. An organization which actually assesses, differentiates, defines and delegates the many constituent elements of its total life and activities is well on the way to smoothly running programs built by and around earnest personnel. We will observe as the two succeeding sections are studied, therefore, that program and personnel phases are a natural auxiliary to policy designation.

Program

The policy structure of the church organization exists solely for the purpose of coordinating the human factors and the physical factors into a program. If those two all-important elements are not in balance, a lop-sided program results. Between the policy and program phases of the church organization stands the pastor. He does not stand entirely alone, and yet in most of the churches of Protestantism chiefly his leadership makes it possible for policy to be translated into program. It follows that a clear-cut comprehension of the basic organizational framework and of his authority within that framework

are indispensable to his efforts in effective leadership. The flow of authority must be uninterrupted and definite from the official group through the key leaders and on into the program.

Usually the pastor is the chief coordinator of program phases and activities. There is where he can be truly creative, for the gifted imagination opens large opportunities and methods for impressing the church's message upon people. Once a policy structure is formed, the wise pastor will devote his efforts increasingly to its implementation into program. Lacking the staff which commercial enterprises or comparable "business" possess—and there is one of the underlying weaknesses of many of our churches today—the pastor accepts the problem as an executive opportunity and proceeds to supervise the overwhelming numbers of details. Often he prepares mailings, keeps membership rolls in current condition, supervises workmen as they repair plumbing, checks details of coming programs, makes personal contacts about committee meetings, is alert to such problems as are created when two organizations plan a rummage sale for the same week, must see that two groups are never scheduled to meet simultaneously in a given room of the building, plans and purchases bulletin folders, issues statements for newspaper publicity, arranges for special speakers and sees that they are driven to and from the church meetings, and on and on . . . Who, but the pastor, in many situations, is in a position to coordinate these and multitudes of other data which comprise the work of his church? Data coordination thus is one of his intensely valuable functions.

Major program coordination also is a pastor's "must," for the variety of personnel and physical facilities which are brought together to form a program is almost without number. Programs at Christmas time, for example, may feature a junior choir, a drama group, and

decorations prepared by the chancel committee so that they are in keeping with the choir's arrangement and the pageant's requirement. Perhaps the official group requests that an offering for missions be included in the program. Who but the pastor could bring together these various factors into the planning of a program? Central leadership is the only efficient method by which poorly planned and patched-together programs can be avoided.

Among the unhappy possibilities of poorly-planned programs are these from the writer's observation and experience, which the reader can match or surpass: a printed program listed two stanzas of a hymn for assembly participation in a choral number, but when the choir led the assembly in the hymn it led with a second stanza that was different from the one printed in the program; a pianist-friend of the leader was spontaneously called to the piano to provide instrumentation for singing at a combined woman's meeting, with the result that the rather unskilled pianist paused between singing to select each song before it was announced to the group; musicians to sing special numbers at a program were dismissed from school at one o'clock because they were told the program was to begin at one-thirty, but somebody neglected to take into account the obvious fact that they were not needed until after the completion of business and election of officers, or about an hour later; and so on.

It has been suggested that the pastor's major duty, once organizational phases are planned and responsibilities are delegated, is to execute the policies in terms of program. The broad outline of that program may be determined by the official body or a specially empowered committee, but with the completion of that outline the work of filling in its gaps and promulgating a plan for concerted activity rests upon the personnel—the pastor, department and organization heads, and other key

workers. Workers' conferences, planning conferences, periodic council meetings of leaders, and continuous counseling between and among those leaders is the process by which the broad program outline assumes a form and content consistent with facilities, leadership and objectives.

Personnel and Human Relations

The pastor's human relationships are his only medium of exchange. Often the cost is high, but an average pastor finds that there are compound returns on his time-and-energy investment. So that his investment will eventuate in large returns—in the benefit which accrues to others—he needs to be an administrator of human relations.

Once again we are confronted with the problem of being A leader without becoming THE leader in the local church organization. The pastor's leadership is assumed; but it is also assumed that there are other capable leaders in his organization. Occasionally an individual crusade by the pastor may be justifiable or even necessary, but let him also remind himself that each time he assumes a key role and becomes a prime mover of an enterprise, he thereby eliminates an opportunity to develop lay leadership. There is great force indeed in the axiom to the effect that the pastor should delegate work to ten men rather than try to do the work of ten men. There is tremendous potential in the wills, abilities and energies of the countless thousands of church folk who at times find their pastors aggressively leading in endeavors which they could—perhaps would!—have spark-plugged had not their decision to inaction been made unceremoniously for them. But this charge may sometimes be levelled against laymen also, for they have been known to voice the sentiment that it is easier for them—the leaders—to do a given job themselves than to see that some other person does it. We may as well face it. Pastors and laymen both are at fault in this matter, with the un-

happy result that others are not trained to assume their share of the load.

This is a predicament, for church leaders—and particularly pastors—are ever struggling between the two issues of giving adequate and aggressive leadership and of cultivating and encouraging adequate and aggressive leadership and participation by persons outside key posts. The solution must be found in the pastor's and laymen's sense of balance which is activated through personal earnestness and careful attention to the general tone of the church group as a whole. In most instances, if the pastor feels that he WANTS to lead a crusade or program the high probability is that his attitude which that desire expresses calls for his careful delegation of the leadership to another; if he feels that he MUST lead such an enterprise, let him consider the advantage of at least sharing the undertaking with another.

The training and cultivation of personnel for cooperative efforts along with the pastor is a second aspect of human relations insofar as his responsibility is concerned. The process may be described in this way: he informs himself, he becomes enthusiastic about opportunities opened by the information; he envisions duties which he may or should share with others; he recruits others; he delegates them, informs them, stimulates them, and thereafter supports and guides them.

This process implies a pastor's understanding of human nature—types of temperaments and abilities, provision of construction direction, promotion of genuine interest in the work of others, giving of individual recognitions, etc.

The matter of responsibility is an impressive consideration as the pastor works with his associates. The cornerstone of their relationship is his assumption of final responsibility for their decisions. Honest doubts may exist about the acceptability of this principle, but there are good reasons for its ne-

cessity: any other policy would risk eventual discord between pastor and personnel because the actual fact is that most people feel there is a direct line of definite authority in the pastoral office which emanates from the official body and from the general denomination; there is a good psychological effect on the personnel if the pastor so completely trusts their competence that he is willing to back up their actions and decisions with his own position and reputation; all church personnel are grouped together around a common leader with whose judgment they may sometimes disagree but to whose position they all avow a high degree of loyalty; it is good generalship for the pastor to maintain the respect and cooperation of his associates at all costs save fundamental compromise with deep and meaningful personal convictions. Indeed, a pastor's success is measured more by the result of his work with his associates than by his own individual skill or efforts as such.

It should be added that the question of pastoral responsibility with reference to his associates need not become a disturbing element in their inter-relationships, for techniques exist which reduce the probability of such a disturbance. One such method is the oft-employed council meeting at which inventory is taken, plans are discussed, programs are initiated. Leaders who present any real problem because of temperamental or prejudicial impediments at the point of discussion should not be excluded from such meetings, but, to the contrary, should be in attendance for the sake of their own enlightenment and cultivation. Frankness, creative discussion, careful recording of salient features adopted—these are some of the characteristics of successful council sessions. Out of such situations emerges a sense of cooperation which is indicated by the absence of an iron grip by anybody upon the group, and by feeling that its enterprise is greater than any participant in it. With the information and spirit of the leaders inseparably

welded into the thinking of each individual participant—because each discusses and helps determine the actions taken by the group—tensions and inaccuracies and confusions disappear and positive reactions result.

Conclusion

This survey of the administrative work of the pastor suggests several conclusions of importance. First, his duty calls for specialized training in the field of church administration. Second, his total administrative function is comparable to that of the business executive in a firm of similar proportions. Third, the total effect of a given standard of pastoral administration will not be felt immediately, but an effect is certain. Fourth, good pastoral administration is not a substitute for other pastoral functionings, but neither must it be marked down in importance. Fifth, a church whose affairs are poorly administered cannot render the service of which it is potentially capable. Finally, the pastor's administrative responsibility is to plan creatively, to coordinate activities, and to delegate responsibility within his sphere of authority.

There are many parts to a church organization! We have considered many of the tangible and many of the intangible aspects of a group which combines individual effort in behalf of the pursuit of religious values. We have seen how church and civil laws provide and secure its authority, how its members determine its general function, how that function is seen as a whole with many parts, how the official body then defines the scope and operation of its group and the leaders project the policies into a program in which the people participate. The authority-function-program cycle is completed as those people then periodically elect their officers again.

Succeeding articles could well bring the discussion to an even more concrete level for consideration of detailed administrative procedure, in terms of such topics as property maintenance, building programs, finances, the church office, and other areas.