

It's important to care for your pastor

BY TODD GRAY
KBC Executive Director

Good pastors are hard to find. Some churches that are without a pastor have spent two years or longer in a search for their next one. Currently there are approximately 280 Kentucky Baptist churches searching for their next senior leader.

But what if you already have a good pastor? What are you doing to help him and his family enjoy their service to your congregation?

I recently discovered a practice called "Stay Interviews." Think the opposite of an exit interview. An exit interview is something an HR professional may carry out when an employee leaves an organization to learn what went well and what could have gone better. A stay interview is something leaders can do to find out whether good employees are flourishing in their work and what would make a valuable team member want to leave for another role.

Churches who already have a good pastor, one who is faithfully (do not hear perfectly) leading the flock, feeding the flock and caring for the flock will want to

make sure their pastor is flourishing in his assignment--and if not, is there something the church can do to help.

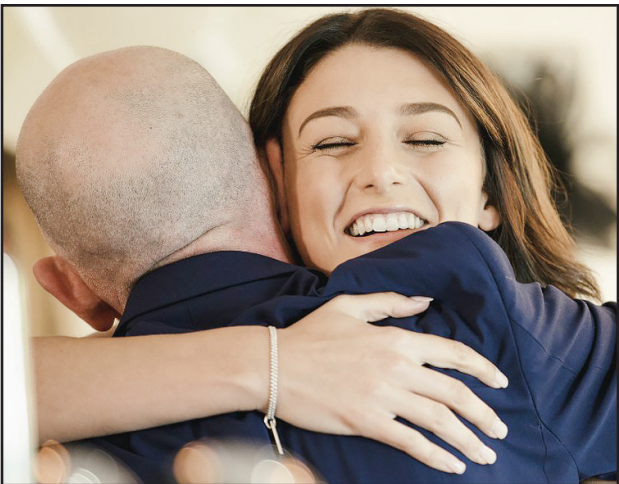
Here are five practices to help your pastor flourish in his role.

1. **Pay him a living wage:** This is where a healthy church finance and personnel committee, or elder board, can be worth its weight in gold.

Consider what professionals in your area get paid and pay your pastor accordingly. Your pastor is asked to prepare sermons each week, counsel families dealing with crises, lead the church to advance its mission and much more.

Many pastors have earned a Bible college degree, a seminary master's degree and in some cases a doctorate. Consider what a business leader, high school principal, military officer or a factory supervisor in your community is being paid and pay your pastor accordingly. If you cannot afford that level of pay, then decide as a church to do the very best you can to support your pastor and his family.

2. **Pray for him con-**



sistently: One thing that every church elder or deacon can do is ask church members to pray for their pastor. Pray for him as he spends time each week studying to preach. Pray that God will give him wisdom as he works with other leaders in the church to develop strategic plans to impact the community with the gospel and disciple members of the church.

Pray for his personal and family time so that he will be able to enjoy the life and ministry the Lord has given him. Also ask God to fill him with the Holy Spirit and protect him from the evil one. Your prayers will

make a difference in your pastor's life.

3. **Protect him from church bullies:** Almost every church has one. Who is that person or family who seems poised to attack your pastor when he makes the first misstep or leads in a way that challenges their preferences for the sake of advancing the gospel in the community?

Church bullies, like all bullies, must be challenged. Titus 3:10 admonishes church leaders, "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them."

While your pastor may be the one who confronts

a divisive church member, it will be helpful for you to support him when he does.

4. **Be sparing on your criticism:** There may be times when you need to share a concern, or even a criticism, with your pastor.

There is nothing wrong with having a concern, but make sure you are careful in how you bring it to his attention.

It is best to share it personally, face to face if possible, and not on Sunday as that is the time he is consumed with many responsibilities. Plan a phone call or visit later in the week and share your concern in a way that honors his role, believes the best about him and his motives and gives the benefit of the doubt for things over which you may not be aware.

5. **Love and honor his family:** One of the best things you can do to help your pastor flourish in his calling is to value and honor his family. Pastor families pay a price for serving in a local church. It is a great privilege to be part of a pastor family, but one that carries unique challenges.

Your pastor is a pub-

lic figure. That puts his family in a fishbowl, making them feel that all their actions are being watched. Find ways to show your pastor's wife and children that they are valuable to you and to your church.

There is more a church can do to care well for its pastor, but these five will make a difference--not just for your senior pastor but for your entire staff.

Make it a priority to do the best you can to love those who lead your congregation.

God reminds us in Hebrews 13:17 that while shepherds have a great responsibility to a flock, that the flock also has an equally great responsibility to those who shepherd them. The verse says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."

If God has given you a faithful man of God to lead your congregation, then do your best to also care well for him and his family.

Pastoral ministry can be very demanding

BY HAROLD BEST
Kentucky Baptist Convention

Pastoral ministry is one of the most demanding and stressful callings. Many pastors admit to struggling with both loneliness and discouragement.

Nearly 40 percent of pastors report experiencing depression and burnout, while the majority work over 50 hours per week. Alarming, nearly 90 percent have considered leaving ministry at some point. Among those who frequently think about stepping away, 91 percent cite ongoing conflict within their congregation as a significant factor. Many pastors lack a close friend in which they can confide.

Given the stresses, loneliness, and pressures associated with pastoral ministry, prioritizing personal wellness is essential for pastors. The better pastors care for themselves, the better they can serve their churches and families. Staff members of the Kentucky Baptist Convention (KBC) regularly pray for pastors and church staff, seeking their well-being and flourishing. We are available to help assess overall wellness and provide coaching to support pastoral health.

Spiritual Health

- I read or listen to the Bible daily or regularly.
- I set aside time each day for prayer and reflection.
- I take intentional steps to repent of known sins in my life.

Physical Health

- My eating habits are healthy and consistent (e.g., regular meals).
- I engage in regular physical activity (at least 150 minutes per week).
- I get adequate sleep (most adults need 7-8 hours nightly).

There is link between pastoral, church health

BY HAROLD BEST
Kentucky Baptist Convention

Early in pastoral ministry, I noticed that my emotional and spiritual state often set the tone for the entire congregation. When I felt discouraged or frustrated, the church reflected that. But when I was hopeful and encouraged, the church responded with similar positivity. I came to understand that beyond offering a Christ-like example, two of the most valuable gifts I could give were hope and encouragement.

Likewise, a pastor's overall well-being--spiritual, emotional, and physical--has a direct impact on the health of the church. When a pastor's personal wellness is nurtured and supported, the positive effects ripple throughout the congregation in tangible and lasting ways.

Here are just a few ways churches benefit when they invest in their pastor's well-being:

1. Stronger Spiritual Leadership

Pastors who are spiritually and physically renewed tend to lead from a place of overflow rather than exhaustion. The result is often Spirit-led, biblically grounded preaching that inspires the congregation to grow in their own walk with Christ.

2. Greater Missional Passion

A healthy pastor brings greater energy and enthusiasm to evangelism, discipleship, missions, and outreach. This passion is contagious, often sparking greater engagement and vision among church members.

3. Healthier Relationships

Emotionally healthy pastors are better equipped to handle conflict with grace, offer patient counsel, and cultivate unity. This relational strength builds trust and deepens the bonds within the church family.

4. A Culture of Wellness

When pastors model healthy rhythms--rest, spiritual disciplines, boundaries, and family time--they teach the congregation that self-care isn't selfish, it's good stewardship. Over time, this creates a culture where health and wholeness are valued churchwide.

BY DELANEE WILLIAMS

Think about a time you were a new person in a new setting and felt like an "outsider." Perhaps it was a new neighborhood, job, or church.

Being in a new setting can be difficult. For most of us who've attended the same church for years, it's easy to forget the perspective of being new.

Several years ago, I moved to Nashville. I was a new person in a new city, looking for a new church home. Since I'd served on church staffs, I'd not had the experience of searching for a church home since college.

If you would've asked me when I was on church staff if we did a good job connecting with families and making it easy for them at our church, I would've said yes. But with a fresh perspective, I realized we could've done more.

This experience reminded me of the necessary empathy needed for our church guests. If visiting a church was difficult for me, how much harder must it be for next-gen families?

Kids, students, and their families want to feel comfortable in a new environment and feel welcomed and included. If people come to our churches and don't feel welcomed, they likely won't return. They'll miss opportunities to hear the gospel and grow in their relationship with Christ.

As a next-gen ministry, you have the opportunity to reach kids, students, and their families. Often, the next-gen ministry is the first interaction families have with a church. If their child or student has a good experience in their class, they're more likely to return and connect with an adult group. As next-gen ministry leaders, our role is weighty. It's a big responsibility.

Here are simple actions your church can take to make a big difference in creating a welcoming environment for guests:

1. Correct information matters

Do your church's website and print materials include up-to-date information? Incorrect information can be confusing for guests. Regularly review published information to ensure all content is correct. For security purposes, list a general area for check-in for guests in next-gen ministry rather than listing specific class-



rooms, including maps.

2. Signs can make a big difference

Think from the perspective of someone who's never been to your church. More than likely, they won't know where to park, where the worship center is, where guests register, where their kid's or student's class is, or where their class is. Clearly labeled signs help guests easily identify parking, the worship center, and classrooms.

3. Designate a central place to register guests

Volunteers can obtain the information needed and identify the class for the children and students. Enlist and train greeters to personally walk with the family to the specific areas of the church, including the worship center and classrooms.

4. Wear name tags

You may know everyone in your group, but to the guest who meets several people quickly, it's hard to remember all the names. And it can get embarrassing to ask the name. When everyone is wearing name tags, it limits the awkwardness of asking someone's name you've met before.

In kids and student ministry, name tags can also convey safety and security. They easily identify approved teachers and help communicate to parents who the teacher is, letting them know they've completed your church's guidelines for approved adults to teach their children and students.

5. Regularly clean and eliminate clutter

Make sure the church is

cleaned regularly and free of clutter, especially in the hallways and classrooms. Each Sunday you have an opportunity to make a first impression for guests.

6. Prepare your heart

Prioritize spending time with the Lord and investing in your spiritual growth. When we prepare our hearts, our actions will follow. We'll be intentional about watching for ways to connect with families. Do your group leaders expect new people to attend each week? If so, their actions will reflect that by arriving early, being prepared, and welcoming new families.

7. Welcome each family

Whether a family arrives to class early, on time, or late, welcome them. We don't know all the challenges of their morning. The reality is, for some families, it's an accomplishment to make it to church. We don't need to contribute to the discouragement by actions or words that could be perceived as judgmental. Celebrate that they're at church and encourage the family.

8. Communicate and collect important information

Parents expect policies to be in place and followed. Make families aware of policies such as safety and security, pick up, and drop off. Collect important information to help meet their needs while at church.

9. Intentionally follow up with guests

When guests share their information, they foresee receiving contact from the church. Does your church

have a process of utilizing the information to connect with guests?

Many churches have a process of following up with guests after their first church visit. Few churches continue to follow up after their second or third visit.

Connecting with guests again after a return visit allows them time to connect with members. And it gives an opportunity to ask questions they may have after learning more about the church. It can be a quick text or phone call. A simple hello or "How can I pray for you today?" can communicate care to families.

I've found relationships are built through these intentional contacts made. The genuine contact communicates people from church want to get to know them and want them to be a part of the church.

10. Ask sincere questions

Ask questions to get to know them and to learn about their story. You genuinely want to learn about the person and try to find a point of connection.

11. Ask for feedback

Follow up with a family who's recently joined your church. Ask them to be honest with you about their family's experience as a guest. Make sure to give them the freedom and comfort to share honestly with you. Thank them for their honesty. Then, ask them to help you make the changes needed to help new families feel connected.

Editor's note: This article originally appeared at Lifeway Research.