

What Can You Expect of Your Pastor?

Prepared by the Staff
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All congregations have expectations of their pastors, as well they should. These expectations usually fall within two categories. Some are *explicit*. They have been thoroughly discussed by church and pastor prior to his or her call, agreed to by both parties, and are often included in the written pastor/church contract. Changes, when they occur, are negotiated and clearly communicated to all concerned. Examples include compensation, specific responsibilities such as officiating at weddings and funerals, and the minimum number of hours to be worked each week. These are usually fairly clear and therefore unlikely to cause misunderstandings or conflict between church and pastor or between members of the congregation.

Less clear and with greater potential for being the source of misunderstanding and conflict are *implicit* expectations. These are unwritten and often unspoken assumptions the congregation makes about the pastor and what she/he does or does not do, which may or may be a match between the affected parties. These can cover the full range of possibilities - from what the pastor wears when leading worship to how much time the pastor spends in preparing for worship, and even whether or not the pastor's family attends worship. Does she/he keep regular office hours? Or call on new visitors? Or attend the monthly meeting of the women's circle? Or fix the furnace?

The difficulty with implicit expectations is not in the expectations themselves. It's not a matter of right or wrong, but a matter of agreement and communication. Problems arise from a failure to address and fully explore an area of concern and come to consensus and then share the information with all concerned. How can the pastor know what is expected if it has never been discussed? Sometimes it's assumed the pastor will be or act in a certain way simply because that's the way the previous pastor did it. But not all pastors are alike!

In an attempt to assist congregations in talking with their pastors about this important subject, and to encourage them to be clear as possible about their own expectations, the staff of Mid-American Baptists church have compiled a list of their own. In our view they are representative and reasonable for a local church pastor serving in our Region, though not exhaustive. You may want to add others. And you will need to tailor them to your own situation. Not all congregations are alike!

- We expect our pastor to exhibit commitment to American Baptist Churches USA and its mission.
- We expect our pastor to have read and signed the Ministers Council Covenant and Code of Ethics for American Baptist Churches.
- We expect our pastor to attend Area and Regional meetings and to provide leadership for Area, Regional and Biennial events, and to support Region camping.
- We expect our pastor to support United Mission and the four denominational offerings.
- We expect our pastor to participate in ecumenical efforts and to inform our congregation of opportunities for mutual ministry and service.
- We expect our pastor to keep regular office hours and to be available to the congregation.
- We expect our pastor to be involved in regular study and sermon preparation, and also to be involved in times of reflection, prayer, and quiet discernment.
- We expect our pastor will participate regularly in his/her own continuing education.
- We expect our pastor to be responsible for planning, coordinating and leading worship, and to involve others.
- We expect our pastor be an administrator, to oversee and be a resource for the church's boards and committees, and to teach and provide leadership for stewardship.
- We expect our pastor to provide pastoral care and to visit members who are seriously ill, in the hospital or in crisis, and to make calls on shut-ins.
- We expect our pastor to be involved in spiritual, grief, and other forms of counseling, and to make referrals to other community resources as needed.
- We expect our pastor to reach out and to lead the congregation in reaching out to others in the community needing Christ, to call on new visitors and to teach new member classes.
- We expect our pastor to be responsible for the teaching ministry of the church and to lead Bible study.
- We expect our pastor to meet regularly with the Pastoral Relations Committee, to engage in mutual evaluation of ministry, to discuss opportunities for continuing education and issues of self-care, and to review compensation annually.

