

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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What Should You Pay Your Pastor?

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Did you know that the average senior pastor stays at a church less than five years? Does this seem like a short amount of time? Consider youth pastors. The average tenure of a youth pastor is eighteen months! There are many factors that influence longevity of a man's ministry in a church, but the net effect on the congregation is a sense of ministry roulette. It is hard to build long-term ministry in a community when turnover is a frequent issue.

People in business and ministry try to reduce personnel turnover because it can be costly in terms of dollars, morale, and strategy. This is a difficult problem to solve. There was a church in Indiana that had grown significantly over the last two decades. The pastoral staff had almost no turnover during that period. The senior pastor was asked his secret for keeping his staff together during that time. His answer was, "That's easy! You do two things: get the right people and treat them right."

Is that too simplistic? I don't believe it is. There are occasions where God leads a pastor to another ministry. But how often do we neglect the needs of our pastors, make them feel unappreciated, and give them cause to consider other ministries? This happens in business. Ministry is no different. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, "If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?" (1 Corinthians 9:11 NIV). Pastors work hard to minister to us. We need to work hard at saying thank you in tangible and bountiful ways.

Per U.S. Census Data, the average household earns about \$40,000 per year excluding benefits such as medical insurance and retirement. The average pastor earns about \$35,000 per year excluding benefits. For many pastors, their salary is the only source of income

for their family. Does the average pastor work less than the average person in the community? Is the pastoral office a less important function than the average job in the community? The answer to both questions is no, so let's make sure we put our money where our mouth is.

Let me suggest a practical way to determine proper pay for your pastor. Many churches compare their pastor's role to that of a teacher or school administrator. This can be a good comparison, and information on salaries can be easy to find for your community. Public school teacher salary schedules are determined by each school board and are based upon the level of education and experience of each teacher. Each board sets its own standard based on the economics of the community. Go to your local school superintendent's office and get a copy for your school district. You then can compare this to your pastor's pay. Most likely you will find that your pastor is underpaid. Remember to evaluate salary and benefits separately. That is the way business employment works. We should use the same standard for our pastors.

Let's give our pastors cause to rejoice at God's provision through us. Let's develop long-term church ministries with long-term pastors. Many churches are preparing budgets for the upcoming year. Are you giving your pastor cause to rejoice in 2001?

BBC Foundation has been ministering to churches and individuals regarding biblical stewardship since 1992. Send your questions on finances and stewardship to: BBC Foundation, 538 Venard Rd., Clarks Summit, PA 18411. Phone: (800) 451-8668, website: bbcfoundation.org; e-mail: info@bbcfoundation.org