

Preparing a Ministry Resume That Gets Attention

By Guy Futral

Your resume is a reflection of a significant part of your life as a minister. When it comes into the hands of a Search Committee or Personnel Committee it is likely to be read, studied, pondered over and discussed by this group of people. What are they looking for? What are they interested in knowing about you? What gets their attention?

Some time ago, I wanted to know the answers to these questions, so I asked to meet with a number of committees I had previously trained as they began their work. What had they found in the numerous resumes they had seen, what got their attention, what was interesting, and perhaps most important---what did they want to see that was NOT there?

The responses began to form a consistent pattern. There were two areas that surfaced with each group:

1. 1. What has happened where this person has been?
2. 2. What is this person like?

After exploring this with a number of ministers who wanted to incorporate these ideas into their resumes, it became clear that several basic ideas were surfacing. Let's look at the results:

“What’s happened where you have been?”

First, to answer the question “What’s happened where you have been?” means listing the highlights or accomplishments of each of the churches served. This is best done in one or two line phrases with “bullets.” Information presented in this style is concise and easy to absorb.

Begin each highlight with a verb followed by a descriptive phrase. Here are some examples:

- Developed outreach program involving 12 people on weekly basis.
- Added 20 members to Sunday School in three months.
- Added three classes to young adult department
- Remodeled Worship Center
- Reorganized committee structure to a ministry team approach.
- Began gifts based ministry approach with Deacons

List four to six of these items for each church or position in which you have served. If you have had more than ten years experience, concentrate on the last ten years and give one or two highlights for the positions prior to that.

It may be easier to begin with a “raw” list of all the accomplishments you can remember having happened in each church, without regard to their importance. It will become obvious that some of these are clearly of lesser importance. Invite your spouse look at the list. They may remember some things you have forgotten! This list of accomplishments is

intended to reflect your leadership style and effectiveness. It will help a committee to connect with the kinds of things they want to see happen in their church. When the Lord is leading a ministry candidate toward the church, this information serves as a confirmation of the decision they both must make.

The space this occupies on a resume is generally no more than one page. For the experienced minister of more than ten years and several positions, it may take a page and a half, but seldom is more space necessary.

“What are you like?”

The second area of primary interest to the church search committee requires an answer to their question, “What are you like?” Committees would like to know more than the brief biographical statistics normally found on a resume. They can see the educational background, the places served, the family, the community and denominational service.

You may include a picture of yourself or you with your family. Still, such questions as these remain unanswered: “I wonder what this person is like? How does this person care for people? What kind of leadership style does this person have? How does this person proclaim the Word, share the Gospel?”

A good response can be made in a concise, one-page statement. This page might be titled “Statement of Ministry,” “Practice of Ministry” or “Priorities in Ministry.” You may consider another more creative title for your resume. Now, for the content of the page, there should be three paragraphs: proclamation, pastoral care, and leadership.

Proclamation

Every minister has this responsibility. Pastors do it primarily through preaching, ministers of education through teaching and equipping, ministers of music through worship and teaching. Each staff position has its own focus. Of course, all have the personal task of sharing the Word of witness as we live in the world.

Proclamation allows you to describe how this priority is carried out in his ministry. For example, the pastor might describe the typical styles of sermons preached or indicate the study habits for sermon preparation. Another example could refer to the process whereby lay people are trained in witnessing. Exactly how this is written will be unique to the individual.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care is a paragraph that tells how you “tend the flock” or your particular part of the flock. List the ongoing ways you connect with people. State your awareness of the need to be present for crisis situations and identify some of those. If you train others in care giving skills, comment on that.

Leadership

The Leadership paragraph focuses on three aspects of your leadership role:

First, describe your leadership style. Using a metaphor is a good way to do this. “I am a player/coach leader” or a “servant type leader” are examples of this. You will shape a metaphor that is more appropriate for you.

Second, relate how you work with small groups such as committees, work groups, and deacons. It is in these settings where the leadership skills emerge. Describe your style of working with these groups. It may be a “close, hands on” style or a “give them the resources and trust them to get it done” style. It may be somewhere between these, but provide a brief view of how your leadership style works.

Third, describe how your ministry role helps the church find the vision God has for it. If this is a staff position, you may want to refer to being a part of the “pastoral team.” This is the big picture side of leadership.

Basics

Typically, resumes give the following essential information, usually placed at the beginning of the resume.

- Name, address, telephone numbers, e-mail address
- Family information: (i.e. spouse’s name, children’s names and ages)
- Education: schools attended, dates and degrees.
- Denominational service. (Associational, State Convention, SBC) Concentrate on the last five years. No need to list all positions beyond that.
- Community Service (school organizations, civic clubs, local government volunteering, etc.)
- Significant training achievements.
- Pictures are helpful. They should be recent, well done and copy clearly.

References are expected on a resume. Three to five will usually be sufficient. These need to include people who can speak to your performance as a minister -- your preaching or teaching skills, working with people, leadership style and generally how you do your ministry. The list may also include “character” references who may not have seen you at work, but know you as an honest, upright person of good reputation.