

## How Many Offices in a Church?

Questions have a way of making us think. I have plenty of questions regarding the way we typically set up the staff of a church. These questions stem from a desire to match practice with the precepts of God's Word. Have we developed an office in the church which was not present in the New Testament? Paul wrote to the church membership in Philippi along with their pastors (bishops) and deacons. Perhaps in the development of our New Testament Baptist churches in the 20th century we have added a third office. What office am I talking about? What has prompted my inquisitive thoughts? I have noticed some practices that have become common which points to the possibility that many churches today have become more like business organizations than living organisms. I see this in the corporate set-up and treatment of a church staff. Could it be that the set-up of a church staff comes more from standard business operation than the New Testament?

### What Is Your Office?

A New Testament church has a definite membership and two definite offices — pastors and deacons. It seems obvious that when the church prospered and one man could not do all that a pastor needs to do the church had more than one pastor. Is that true today? Are there more than one man pastoring? If so, what is the relationship of those men? Where is the pattern of that relationship? In the New Testament? In a corporate office? If the only two offices that exist in a New Testament church are pastors and deacons then what is the office of a God-called, trained, ordained “staff member”?

### Why the Gulf in Treatment?

If a God-called, trained, ordained “staff member” is a pastor then why is the treatment of **the** pastor (non-biblical differentiation) so different from the other pastors? Why is the relationship more like an executive and his secretarial staff than like a team of pastors exercising their spiritual gifts in a team effort? Why is **the** pastor well taken care of while the other pastors live on a shoe-string? Why does the church purchase a new car for **the** pastor while the other pastors make by on what they can? Why does the church give **the** pastor Christmas, birthday and church anniversary gifts while the other pastors receive a gift from **the** pastor (as if they are his personal staff/secretaries rather than an office in the church)? Why is the office of **the** pastor very nice, even extravagant, while the offices of the other pastors are modest? Why does the church supply a retirement policy for **the** pastor while the other pastors receive little if anything? Remember when churches put a pastor in a parsonage, paid him little, provided no retirement and even had him opt out of social security to save the employer's share of the benefit? At the end of a life of ministry he had nothing with which to provide for himself and the church wanted a younger pastor. Why has that changed for **the** pastor but not for the other pastors? Imagine a pastor (staff member) opting out of social security, living on a shoe-string with no “pastor perks” for twenty or thirty years and then facing retirement years. If that person is a pastor (if not what is his office?) then why is he treated so differently from **the** pastor? If he is not a pastor then why did the church ordain him? To provide him with a tax break (just how pragmatic have we become?)? If simply for a tax break then why not ordain everyone who receives a church salary? Secretary? Maintenance? School teachers? If the God-called, ordained “staff members” are pastors then why do they not attend the business and planning meetings of the church officers (pastors and deacons)? Have you ever heard of the pastoral staff attending the deacons meetings?

I am beginning to wonder if the way the church treats their pastors (excluding **the** pastor) is inappropriate. I am beginning to wonder if the way **the** pastor organizes **his** (???) staff is taken from the world of secular business corporations rather than the spirit and teaching of the New Testament. Have we not, in effect, established a third office? Pastor, deacons and staff members rather than the New Testament pattern of pastors and deacons.

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