

After serving for 20 years as a pastor and arranging some 50 or so evangelistic crusades, I am still astounded at my reluctance to approach an evangelist, and his reluctance to approach me, about a subject of paramount importance to both of us: how his salary will be paid.

Since there is no standard concerning such matters, I would like to mention the unmentionable to my fellow pastors in an attempt, it not to establish some sort of standard, at least to contribute toward a better understanding of the issue.

Broaching the Issue

Whose responsibility is it to open the matter of how an evangelist will be paid? It is customary for the inviting party, the host, to do so. But before making the contact, the pastor needs to remind himself of some basic differences between how the two complementary ministries are compensated, a disparity that is fundamental to understanding the evangelist's needs.

Unlike that of the pastor, the evangelist's income is not fixed. It is affected by a host of unique variables such as the size or generosity of the congregations and pastors he is invited to serve, unexpected schedule interruptions, untimely cancellations, illness, holidays, conventions—all of which deprive him and his family of needed income. Yet their needs (home, car, food, clothing, taxes, phone, utilities, insurance) remain fixed.

Besides this sobering problem, a pastor should consider the differences in how the

professional expenses of the two ministries are funded.

As a pastor, I am fortunate that those expenses, for the most part, are underwritten by the church. This includes stationery, postage, supplies, long-distance calls, conventions, paid vacations, secretary, office supplies and equipment, hospitalization, auto expenses—a whopping outlay each year!

But the poor evangelist, plagued by an erratic, unpredictable itinerary, must pay all these costs exclusively from the offerings or honorariums he receives from churches. Net income, after expenses, is sometimes pitifully inadequate and has forced many evangelists from the field God has called them to serve.

Travel Expenses

While the heart of evangelism has remained unchanged over the past decade, it now wears a new face. More and more churches are opting for shorter meetings. One-, 2-, 3-, or 4-day engagements are common, forcing evangelists to enlist more bookings and, therefore, to travel more. They are required to use air travel more frequently.

It has become my policy at the time I engage an evangelist to assure him we will underwrite the cost of his round-trip airfare in a manner he suggests. If he drives his own automobile to be with us, I compute his expenses at a standard rate per mile round-trip and present him with a check when he arrives.

Food and Lodging

Since the quality of an evangelist's ministry is directly related to his physical strength, it is important to me that we make the best possible provision for his accommodation while he is with us, especially guarding his rest and privacy. Although it involves more expense, I insist on a comfortable hotel room with restaurant privileges. Almost without fail I have found the evangelists appreciative of this arrangement and considerate of the expense involved. In fact, in all my years of working with evangelists I can recall only one instance where the privilege was even remotely abused.

I am also mindful of his privacy. While I enjoy fellowship with an evangelist, I am careful not to impose myself on him.

Paying the Evangelist

In all my years of pastoring, I have yet to have an evangelist demand a fixed minimum amount for his services. Most are still willing to “trust the Lord” for their income. However, when I have directly asked the evangelist how much he would need, I have not been surprised when he has given me, albeit reluctantly, an amount often double my own salary. I understand this amount includes his professional expenses and those weeks of unemployment that plague his schedule.

I am also aware that at those times when I may need his ministry for only a Sunday, though in my rationale it may be “just for a Sunday” and the honorarium minimal, to the

evangelist it often means forfeiting a week's income for an honorarium. A Sunday is a week to an evangelist.

How much should you pay an evangelist? I have wrestled with this question for years and for my part am convinced that, in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, the best policy is to leave it up to the generosity of the people by receiving a love offering for the evangelist as a second offering in each service he ministers (including Sunday morning). When this practice is implemented, it is important that the church establish a policy of setting a minimum evangelist's salary in the event some emergency beyond his control (such as weather) detracts from the attendance. It is crucial that the pastor personally receive the offerings and that the congregation understand the evangelist's needs and be urged to give generously. It has also helped our offerings when the people know their gifts are exclusively earmarked for the evangelist and not for "revival expenses."

That Christ commissions and sends His evangelists to the field is a fact few pastors will dispute. It is also a sad fact that all too many evangelists can identify with our Lord's warning to the 72 He sent two by two: "Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves" (Luke 10:1, 3, NIV).

Some of those wolves are real, and some are imaginary, of course; but we pastors, protectors of the Lord's flock, can also help protect our fellow-laborers on the evangelistic field and defang some of those wolves (both real and imaginary) by heeding Jesus' advice four verses later: "The worker deserves his wages" (v. 7, NIV).

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(The masculine pronoun is used throughout the original document and therefore replicated here to maintain integrity of the original document. The Assemblies of God is blessed by female pastors and evangelists. The mileage compensation was changed from ".20 cents" to "rate.")

How to Defang a Wolf

DETERMINING AN EVANGELIST'S REMUNERATION

by JIM MILLER
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