

HAT DOES AN ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONARY NEED TO BE GOOD AT?

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Loren Mead, as director of the Alban Institute, asked several hundred denominational executives and bishops what they saw the churches needing for their office. Much of what he found and reports in *Transforming Congregations for the Future* appears to be applicable to the role of the DoM. I am presenting what he has identified here for your consideration, translation, and application.

1. **Congregations need help when they get in trouble**
Included would be church fights, personality conflicts, values of character, problems with the programs and other works of the church, changes in the social environment, sudden loss of memberships, an increase in membership, and difficulty in paying the bills. Mead contends that the DoM needs to know how to help personally or how to get help.
2. **Congregations need to be left alone**
Most churches are doing pretty well. Let them do their work. Be careful that one is not calling on them to attend meetings and do various things in order to justify one's position. (I do not think that he means by this to neglect relationships. See number 9.)
3. **Congregations need to be assisted when they are off base**
Sometimes congregations consider unwise or uninformed actions. The DoM who has developed a good relationship with the leadership can intervene. This may have to do with personnel, facilities, or programs. Although the DoM lacks the traditional authority of a bishop, he may have acquired the level of influence that allows him to call the church to accountability.
4. **Congregations need pastoral care**
When crises come into the life of the church, the DoM represents the broader and larger body of Christ. Mead suggests that this sometimes calls for rather pushy intervention. Similarly, in those higher moments of celebration, the DoM represents the larger church also. (Are our guys pushy enough?)
5. **Congregations need pastoral care for their pastors**
Preachers have problems. Some are endemic, others episodic, others catastrophic. The role of the pastor (staff) is stressful. Expectations are high. Some intentional efforts must be made to care for the pastors and for their families.
6. **Congregations need help with leadership development**
Historically, this has been a major thrust of many associations. The big meetings, the training of workers, and the base programs of the various agencies crowded the calendar. Common field laments included "the people are not coming/the people need training." Many associations are experimenting with new methods and schedules for offering needed training.
7. **Congregations need technical assistance**
Mead takes note of areas such as planning and raising money. We would probably add areas of site location, construction, and program development.
8. **Congregations need a sense of their place in the larger mission**
Here Mead stresses the need for communication between the denomination and the churches. Based on his other writings, he probably should have included reference to the involvement of the laity in local missions and so forth. In reference to the importance of the churches being missional in their outlook, certainly for us, this would include giving attention to doing church extension.
9. **Congregations need someone to listen, and listen, and listen**
They need to know someone cares about them and their church. Someone who's significant to them.

Certainly this has been a major role for DoMs.

10. **Congregations need help in planting churches (beyond Mead)**

In most associations there are places and people groups not churched. The DOM in SBC life is usually the visionary, motivator, resource finder, and often, the doer in planting these new congregations.

What do you think of this list? What lies beyond the appropriate role set of a DoM? What seems to be missing?

AMD--March 20, 2001

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