

BELIEVING THE CALL COMMITTEE?

It is not uncommon to hear a pastor comment in confusion, “When I interviewed, the call committee made it very clear that this was the direction in which the congregation needed to go. But I have only met with resistance.”

Wise is the pastor who does not believe all of what was said by the call committee. Some-times the call committee is merely the alter-ego of the congregation. It is the minority voice in the congregation that indeed knows what the congregation should do to gain a more healthy balance. It knows the areas of ministry that have not been fully addressed in its recent history. It knows the direction in which the congregation must head if it is go-ing to truly be inclusive of the community, or welcoming of the next generation, or, or, or... But, like each of us, knowing what would be good for our improved health, and willingly embracing the lifestyle change that that would require are two vastly different propositions.

It is important to consider a few questions. Is this ministry, which the call committee views as important, already in place, and therefore, appropriate to maintain and continue? Or, is it a ministry that the congregation, as a whole, has not yet embraced? This is easily deter-mined by glancing at past annual reports, es-pecially the financials. If money has not yet been allocated, that is a clue that the request is driven by the alter-ego. The pastor would be wise not to initi-ate that new program in the first year, for it will meet with resistance. In

fact, when it is to be initiated, congregational members, through the appropriate committee, should take the lead with the pastor firmly supporting from the shadows.

Generally, the council selects the call committee. If the council does not have a clear understanding of the congregation's personality and values, the call committee may strive to identify a pastor who will compensate for the congregation's deficiencies rather than compliment and build up the strengths of the congregation. "Bishop, just send us a good pastor!" is a clue that the congregation and/or call committee is clue-less about the personality, or identity, of the congregation.

Since a primary responsibility assigned to me is "congregational identity," subsequent articles will address this topic further. Please feel free to contact me with your questions and concerns. An additional resource is found at [www. congregationalidentity.org](http://www.congregationalidentity.org).