

# EXPECTATIONS FOR LEADERS IN THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH BISHOP GREGORY G. M. INGRAM

## *Godly Expectations*

Effective leaders are concerned with expectations. God expects all we have to offer and if there are godly expectations of leaders, certainly the church should have them as well. In an age when so many things impinge upon our time, God and the church are often put on back burners as we focus our attention on matters we consider more urgent. Many times, as servants and godly leaders, our loyalties are so fragmented that we find it hard to give our entire being to God. We are loyal to our homes, jobs, friends, political parties, country, and a multitude of other individuals and organizations. We are spread so thin and pulled in so many directions that we often find ourselves torn between competing interests. However, nothing must take priority in our lives over our obedience to God's will. This is one of God's commandments, i.e., love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul (Matthew 22:37). We cannot do this on a part-time basis. We must seek, serve, and give God first place in our lives. For anything less than our best is a sin. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer so aptly notes, there is a cost to be paid for discipleship. Leaders must come to grips with matters of Christian stewardship and the fact that God does not want *part* of us. God wants *all* of us.

God is not pleased with a leader's part-time loyalty. Nor is God one to whom we can pass along a favor as we see fit. The Lord asks for our *whole* and *complete* self and will not tolerate or bless casual commitment, lackluster discipleship, or half-hearted service.

## *Pastoral and Local Church Expectations*

Even in understanding and accepting what God expects, many leaders—particularly those serving for the first time—complain that they don't know what their local church or pastor expects of them. That is, they are uncertain about their specific responsibilities and how to execute them.

In the AME Church, many leaders only have *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* and perhaps a few other publications to guide them in equipping saints for service. In light of the awesome duties and responsibilities they must perform, these resources are not enough. Every local church must be specific about its expectations of those responsible for carrying out any function, duty, or responsibility on behalf of any ministry or organization. Guiding principles, processes, and procedures must be in place, giving direction for effective leadership.

## *Administrative Expectations*

In matters of church administration, it is not enough that men and women serving as leaders "mean well" or are "willing to help." When work is delegated, someone must be responsible and accountable for each task. The more clearly defined these administrative factors, the less likely confusion, conflict, redundancy, and oversights erupt. A sound administrative structure need not stifle creativity or make the work of the church any less "spiritual." Delegating responsibilities prevents overworking human resources and the faithful few experiencing burn out.

or in the military but find it difficult to respect authority in the church? Responsibility rests on the other side of authority. There can be no authority, however, without responsibility. Every leader must be held accountable for the exercise of authority. On the other hand, no one should be held accountable for any task that he or she does not have the authority to carry out. Lack of clarity on this point has frequently led to costly delays in implementing programs, hard feelings among members, and futile efforts to move the church forward. Authority and responsibility are inextricably related and should be foremost in the minds of those serving in leadership positions.

### ***Performance Expectations***

To stay relevant to an evolving church as it concerns membership, staff, and ministries, leaders are constantly challenged to deal with change. Policies guiding leaders must be discussed in light of present-day realities. Skills enabling effective leadership must be refined from time to time if they are to be effective in advancing the work of the church. Many churches are aware that the roles and responsibilities of their paid staff, e.g., church administrator, choir director, custodian, secretary, and ministers need to be modified from time to time; but, they have failed to realize the importance of how the roles and responsibilities of *unpaid* leaders—often less clearly defined and monitored—also need periodic examination and revision. Regardless of compensation, the expectations of servant leaders should be committed to writing, evaluated, and refined on a regular basis.

Every leadership position should have a “job description” that includes the following elements:

1. Accountability. Identifies by title the person(s) to whom the position reports.
2. Scope of responsibilities. Provides an overview of the function(s) of the position.
3. Duties. Gives a detailed account of the specific tasks to be performed.
4. Personal requirements. Lists the spiritual preparation, academic training, experience, and other requirements for the position.

Just as a job description sets forth expectations for a given leadership position, a “project summary,” outlining expected outcomes resulting from someone carrying out the job description, should be used for leadership positions as well. The summary sets forth the specific tasks to be performed, when they are to be completed, and to whom the final project report should be submitted.

Finally, there must be a performance evaluation document in place to appropriately evaluate how leaders are doing in their position. Because the church is a largely voluntary institution and many feel they are offering free service, some have the mindset they can do whatever and however they please and see no need for evaluation of their performance. This is wrong. The church belongs to God; and as such, it deserves the very best and most qualified persons running it. With the use of the job description and project summary, leaders’ performances can be effectively assessed and given evaluation of their standing, progress, and items for improvement.

## Points for Reflections

1. Leadership, simply put, is exemplified in drawing people together and directing them to reach a common objective.
2. Leadership rests in the person and not the position. Whether pastor, class leader, minister of music, custodian, or cook, effective leaders use their time, talent, and treasure to glorify God and edify (serve) the people.
3. Pastors, as spiritual leaders of the church, have the responsibility of identifying, selecting, electing, training, and monitoring those who provide servant leadership.
4. Training is the process of acquiring knowledge and skills for effectively serving others. It is necessary for present performance.
5. Development encompasses the growth and maturity that should take place over time in servant leaders. It is necessary for future performance.
6. Adjustments in both attitudes and actions are required by the pastor if our saints are to be adequately equipped for service.
7. Effective servant leaders must be spiritual. That is to say, they must have a professing faith in God, foster and sustain a relationship with the divine as Master of their lives, and live the godly beliefs of love and service.
8. The cost of our discipleship (stewardship, leadership, and service) is to be fully dedicated to our endeavors. God requires no less than and demands our best efforts.
9. Pastors and local churches must be deliberate and specific in their expectations of leaders. Functions, duties, and responsibilities should be spelled out so all understand. Such practice avoids confusion.
10. Authority must rest with some individual or group. All leaders must be held accountable for the exercise of authority.
11. There can be no authority without responsibility. All leaders must be responsible in the exercise of the position.
12. The roles and duties of (un)paid leaders must adapt and change according to present-day realities. Measuring skills, accessing responsibilities, and adjusting all leadership positions are necessary to stay relevant.
13. Job descriptions, project summaries, and performance evaluations assist greatly in ensuring effective servant leadership.