

*If one member suffers, all suffer together with it;
if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.
Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.
(1 Corinthians 12:26-27)*

This scriptural passage reminds us that though we are physically distant from one another... we are always connected as the body of Christ. As your pastor at Spirit of Hope, I get to see behind the scenes how much we really DO reach out and care for one another. On the other hand, we can only reach out and help people IF they let others know what is going on in their lives.

It is startling to me how **little** people these days share about their lives with others. People tend to want to be private or “don’t want to be a bother” to others. Well, let me tell you... that kind of thinking can put me... and the church out of business! This is what I do! I love pastoral care and I am able to share a tremendous amount of time talking to people... **when they call me and let me know there is something going on in their lives that their pastor should know about!** We (not sure who we is) don’t want to be added to the unemployment statistics! Call me!

Simply loving people for who they are and being the “living Jesus” is what each church member wants to be able to do. I try to be available to everyone as much as possible. In fact, I never shut off my phone because (say the next few words in a whisper...) *“bad things happen when you shut off your phone.”* Really – they do. So, I keep my phone close to me most of the time. Of course, there are times that I am busy with others or simply cannot be available where I leave my phone alone for a while... and that is where voice mail comes in handy! I’m just a phone call away!

I found an article that might help some of you know when it may be appropriate to call or contact your pastor. This was written by Pastor David Chancey

Ten times to call your pastor

One of the privileges of being in the ministry is the opportunity to be “pastor” to people in times of joy and in times of adversity. Simply “being there” and having that “ministry of presence” are greatly appreciated by parishioners in need.

I may be slightly biased, but I feel every person should have a pastor and church family to support and minister to them at life's critical points: weddings, births, hospitalizations and surgeries, deaths, family crises, celebrations and losses.

One of the first questions that come to mind when I hear bad news is, “Do they have a pastor?” Right behind that question is, “Do they have a church family that will support them through this crisis?”

Being God's instrument of pastoral care is a great responsibility that ministers take very seriously. There are times, however, when pastors can't minister because members fail to inform them of their need. Only God is all-knowing. The rest of us need to be informed when a ministry opportunity arises.

So when do you call on your minister? Presbyterian minister Daniel Hamby published a list entitled “Ten Times to Call a Pastor.” I have revised it slightly:

- 1. Call your minister before going to the hospital if possible.** If there is to be surgery, many ministers make every effort either to see you or phone you beforehand to have prayer and to affirm confidence in God's care. Sometimes this visit of prayer support happens the day before, or maybe in the hospital room before surgery.
- 2. Call your minister before your marriage reaches the breaking point.** Most ministers are available to talk with about significant marital issues. Many pastors do not do in-depth counseling, but will refer you to skilled, trained professionals for help. Pastors want to help families.
- 3. Call your minister before planning your wedding.** Many ministers require premarital counseling of some form and often this requires several months of meetings before the actual wedding date.
- 4. Call your minister before a young person goes to college or to the armed services.** Pastors want to keep up with what's going on with their young people.
- 5. Call your minister before making funeral arrangements.** He will be sensitive to helping in planning a funeral service that meets your needs and desires. He will provide support in a time of grief. When death occurs, the minister should be among the first notified.

6. Call your minister when a difficult decision confronts you. Life changing decisions should not be made alone. Most ministers can help people think through the options that face them in life. They can certainly join you in praying for God's guidance.

7. Call your minister when you or someone you know needs help. Most ministers will readily admit that there are few easy answers in life, but ministers also know about resources and options which can help.

8. Call your minister when you are slipping into depression. Kierkegaard called spiritual depression "the dark night of the soul." When God seems far off or prayer seems unreal, ministers are there to help you reassess the reality and confidence of the Christian faith.

9. Call your minister when a baby is born. Babies are seen as the symbol of new life. One of the greatest joys of ministry is standing by the bedside of new parents, sometimes holding the newborn, and gushing with the parents and grandparents. Ministers want to rejoice with the new parents and ask God's blessing on the child.

10. Call your minister when you have questions about your faith, or about your church. When you wonder about the meaning of your faith, let your minister know of your questions and struggles. He will be glad to help. When you need information about some process or happening in church life, go "straight to the top" and seek first-hand information. If the ministers doesn't know, he'll be glad to find the answer to your concern.