

NOVEMBER 2025

CALLED TO SHEPHERD

A Practical Field Guide for New Pastors in A.M.E. Zion



**A REFLECTION
FROM A FIRST
YEAR PASTOR**

By Rev. Dr. Sybil Kearse

CALLED TO SERVE

A Practical Field Guide for New Pastors in
A.M.E. Zion

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A PERSONAL WORD FROM MY HEART

This guide is not all-inclusive, and I do not claim to know it all. These are simply lessons and nuggets God allowed me to learn in my first year as a pastor. I discovered that this calling is both beautiful and heavy. We step into a congregation that is adjusting, healing, and hoping, and we don't always have the insight from the previous pastor.

My first church came with limited resources, and God sustained us. I did not take a salary because the needs of the people were greater. That was obedience for my assignment, not a standard for ministry. What matters is that we honor the people and trust God to provide.

Show up consistently. Love well. Lead with grace. And always remember, God chose you for this assignment. He will give you everything you need.

With a shepherd's heart,

Pastor Sybil Kearse

PASTORAL CALL STATEMENT

From Rev. Dr. Sybil Kearse

Pastoring is more than preaching and presiding. It is listening, carrying, guiding, and loving. It is walking into rooms where hearts are breaking and bringing with you the peace of Christ.

You now serve a people who had a pastor before you, and if the Lord delays His return, they will have one after you. You are a steward of a sacred assignment for a specific season.

Your first year is not about proving who you are. It is about learning who they are. It is about honoring the story God was writing long before you arrived and trusting Him to turn the page with you in place.

Lead gently. Stand firmly. Love deeply. Serve humbly. And remember:

You are shepherd to God's flock, not owner of His church. He called you. He will keep you. He will grow you. He will use you.

INTRODUCTION:

THIS HOLY ASSIGNMENT

Being appointed as a pastor in the A.M.E. Zion Church is not simply an assignment to a building or a position. It is a sacred calling to the care of souls. God entrusts a shepherd with people who are already loved deeply by Him. The Discipline gives us the “what” of our responsibilities. This field guide helps you navigate the “how.”

The first year of pastoring is full of excitement, uncertainty, discovery, transition, and spiritual stretching. You step into a legacy you did not create. You inherit people who may have experienced thriving joy or painful trauma before you arrived. You assume leadership in a congregation still adjusting to their own shift. **And yet, God chose you for this moment.**

James 1:5 reminds us that if anyone lacks wisdom, they only need to ask God who gives generously. Wisdom is more than knowledge. It is knowing what to do, when to do it, and how to do it in love.

INTRODUCTION: THIS HOLY ASSIGNMENT

This book invites you to lead with:

- Faith
- Humility
- Courage
- Integrity
- Compassion
- Clarity

Your voice matters, your presence matters, and your obedience matters. Welcome to the call.

CHAPTER 1:

THE CALL COMES FIRST

Before meetings, before budgets, before choosing officers, the first act of pastoral leadership is to go to God. He has entrusted His people to you. Seek His heart for them before you seek their hands for work.

Spend your first days in prayer, asking:
Lord, what do You want to accomplish in this house this year?
How do You want me to serve these people?
Where are their wounds?
Where are their strengths?
What do You want restored?

Proverbs 3:5–6 reminds us to trust in the Lord and He will direct our paths. Pastoral leadership is spiritual before it is administrative.

A Practical Start

- Pray over every pew and every name you learn

CHAPTER 1:

THE CALL COMES FIRST

- Walk the church grounds and consecrate the space
- Anoint your office and invite God's wisdom into every conversation you will have there
- Ask God to help you love the people before you lead the people.

Your authority is valid. Your calling is recognized. But authority without compassion creates distance. Shepherds lead from among the sheep, not above them

CHAPTER 2:

YOUR FIRST WEEK

Appointments are one year at a time in A.M.E. Zion. You are the pastor, but the people do not yet know your heart. In your first week, resist the urge to restructure everything quickly. Listen first.

Until your official Organizational Meeting, assume the previous officers remain in place as allowed in the Discipline. This helps the church operate smoothly while you learn the context.

Your First Week Checklist

- Meet with the Preacher's Steward and Secretary first
- Obtain lists of current officers and auxiliary leadership
- Schedule introductory meetings with each ministry

CHAPTER 2:

YOUR FIRST WEEK

- Ask questions such as:
 - “What has worked well?”
 - “Where do you feel we can grow?”
 - “How can I support you in your role?”
- Be visible, approachable, and observant.

This phase is about relationships more than instructions.

Shepherds smell like sheep.

Pastors gain trust through presence.

Confidence is earned through care.

CHAPTER 3:

YOUR FIRST SUNDAY

The first Sunday sets a tone. Not a tone of authority, but a tone of presence. The people need to see that the pastor sent to them is a pastor who sees them.

A.M.E. Zion tradition recognizes that although the Bishop has appointed you, the congregation should be formally presented to you as their pastor. The Preacher's Steward will introduce you somewhere in the service before the sermon. This reinforces that you are an itinerant minister sent by the church, and they are now under your pastoral care.

You are stepping into a story already in progress. They had a shepherd before you, and unless the Lord returns, they will likely have a shepherd after you. Honor the past. Serve well in the present. Prepare them for the future.

CHAPTER 3:

YOUR FIRST SUNDAY

The Purpose of the First Sermon

- To communicate the heart of Christ
- To acknowledge their transition and feelings
- To affirm your commitment to serve them well
- To focus on the Word, not your resume

Good starting texts include:

Jeremiah 3:15 (shepherds after God's own heart)

John 10:11 (the Good Shepherd)

Philippians 1:6 (God finishes what He starts)

Keep your sermon encouraging and hopeful, leaving room for trust to grow.

How You Show Up Matters

- Be approachable & relatable
- Learn names
- Greet children and seniors first
- Thank every auxiliary that serves
- Smile like God planned for you to be there (because He did)

CHAPTER 3:

YOUR FIRST SUNDAY

And after service, linger.

Stand at the door.

Look them in the eyes.

Let them know they are seen.

Some will size you up.

Some will protect their hearts.

Some will immediately celebrate you.

All will watch to see if your love is real.

This first Sunday plants your first seed.

Keep sowing steady and in due season, you will reap.

CHAPTER 4: YOUR FIRST ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Once the District Planning Meeting is complete and the year's Connectional and District obligations are confirmed, you will hold the first major meeting with your congregation's leadership. This is where your pastoral leadership becomes visible in structure, partnership, and shared responsibility.

This meeting is often called the **Organizational Meeting** because as Pastors we must work with the congregation to organize the church officers and auxiliaries.

It is far more than business. It is about unity, alignment, ownership, and inviting the people into the vision God has entrusted to you.

Why This Meeting Matters

- It affirms existing leadership until changes are properly made
- It sets spiritual and operational expectations for the year

CHAPTER 4: YOUR FIRST ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

- It establishes clarity so rumors do not fill the silence
- It builds confidence that the church is moving with purpose

Remember, change only moves at the pace of trust. This meeting is planting trust.

How to Prepare

- Pray over the meeting and every leader attending
- Review existing leadership structures
- Gather financial records and the latest district obligations
- Prepare copies of the proposed church budget
- Draft a pastoral address that expresses heart and direction

Before you ask anyone to follow you, let them hear you.

CHAPTER 4: YOUR FIRST ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Meeting Flow

A clear and respectful structure makes everyone feel included. Here is a proven rhythm:

- Opening devotion and prayer
- Pastor's Address (heart and expectations)
- Presentation of District assessments and Connectional commitments
- Presentation of proposed local church budget
- Ministry review by auxiliaries and departments
- Confirmation of current officers (until changes are made properly)
- Appointment, nomination, or recommendation of officers as needed
- Setting ministry goals and the annual ministry calendar
- Open floor for questions or clarification
- Closing prayer and blessing

CHAPTER 4: YOUR FIRST ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

When finances are discussed, provide printed copies. Transparency builds trust. Hidden numbers build suspicion.

Important Governance Note

Until new officers are nominated, elected, or confirmed according to the Discipline, all previously elected officers remain in place until you organize the church for the new conference year. This keeps the church functioning and prevents confusion or power vacuums.

Leadership Actions in This Meeting

As Pastor, you will:

- Nominate Stewards, the Preacher's Steward, Class Leaders, and Trustees for Quarterly Conference confirmation

CHAPTER 4: YOUR FIRST ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Recommend any officers needing change for the good of the church

- Affirm all officers who will continue faithfully
- Share how you plan to support leadership development

Everyone should leave knowing:

- Who is responsible for what
- How decisions will be communicated
- What goals they are working toward together

Your Pastor's Address

This moment shapes the culture you build.

Speak from your heart:

- Honor where the church has been
- Affirm the gifts you see in the people
- Emphasize unity and spiritual growth
- Clarify expectations of faithfulness, stewardship, and accountability

CHAPTER 4: YOUR FIRST ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

- Remind everyone that every mission is better when shared.

Vision without clarity becomes frustration.

Vision with collaboration becomes transformation.

Your first Organizational Meeting is not about authority.

It is about alignment.

CHAPTER 5: QUARTERLY CONFERENCES IN PRACTICE

Quarterly Conference is one of the most important structures in A.M.E. Zion. It provides accountability, oversight, order, and spiritual assessment for the church and for the pastor.

While the Discipline defines the formal responsibilities, the pastor's role is to ensure that the spirit of the meeting remains one of unity, transparency, and progress.

Quarterly Conference does not exist to intimidate leaders.

It exists to strengthen the health of the congregation.

Why Quarterly Conference Matters

- Ensures officers are faithfully serving
- Reviews financial integrity and ministry effectiveness
- Gives members voice through governance
- Helps the Presiding Elder support the pastor's leadership

CHAPTER 5: QUARTERLY CONFERENCES IN PRACTICE

Keeps the church aligned with Connectional expectations

Protects both the congregation and the pastor

Accountability is not punishment.

Accountability is protection.

The Spirit of Quarterly Conference

Our roots are accountability with care.

Quarterly Conference is not a courtroom.

It is a family checkup.

Each board and officer gives a report, not to show perfection, but progress.

Washington District Devotion Practice

(Optional practice note, not a Discipline rule)

- Pastor opens with scripture and prayer
- Secretary calls the roll
- Each member stands, gives a scripture, and submits or notes their QC dues

*The church decides QC dues at the
Organizational Meeting.*

CHAPTER 5: QUARTERLY CONFERENCES IN PRACTICE

The Order of Business

The Discipline provides a thorough order, but practically, this is what you prepare for:

- 1.Devotion
- 2.Roll call
- 3.Presiding Elder's address
- 4.Reports from Trustees, Stewards,
Stewardesses, Deaconesses, Leaders,
Auxiliary Officers
- 5.Pastor's Report
- 6.Examination of character (do not be afraid
of this)
- 7.Voting and confirmations of leadership
actions
- 8.Financial accountability questions (salary,
insurance, assessments)
- 9.Reading and approval of minutes

Pastor's Report

This is your opportunity to:

- Celebrate progress

CHAPTER 5: QUARTERLY CONFERENCES IN PRACTICE

- Acknowledge challenges honestly but professionally
- Share souls saved, members restored, baptisms, funerals, marriages
- Confirm mission alignment
- Reflect spiritual temperature, not just statistics

Report as a leader, not as a victim.

Do not use reporting time to “get people told.” The Presiding Elder will feel that. The people will too.

Be factual. Be fair. Be faithful.

Tips for Success Before the Meeting

A prepared pastor communicates strong leadership.

- Review all minutes from previous QC
- Ensure all boards submit their reports early
- Verify financial documents are accurate

CHAPTER 5: QUARTERLY CONFERENCES IN PRACTICE

- Confirm upcoming ministry goals are reflected
- Ensure insurance and records questions have answers
- Meet privately with Presiding Elder if needed beforehand.

When Correction is Needed

Not every ministry is thriving. Not every leader is healthy. Some departments may be consistently inactive, disorganized, or defiant. When changes must be made, act for the good of the church and communicate calmly and directly. Avoid blindsiding leaders publicly. Align every decision with the Discipline. Authority exercised with grace invites cooperation.

Authority exercised with ego invites rebellion. Quarterly Conference asks the pastor as many accountability questions as others. That is the beauty of our polity. You are not expected to be perfect. You are expected to be faithful.

CHAPTER 6: EMPOWERING LEADERS AND OFFICERS

Every pastor must understand this:

You cannot lead the church alone. God places officers, stewards, trustees, class leaders, and department heads around you as partners in ministry.

Your task is not only to utilize leadership.
Your task is to shepherd leadership.
A healthy church is led by healthy leaders.

Your Leadership Team Is a Gift

The Discipline gives pastors the authority to nominate, appoint, and recommend leaders for confirmation. The goal of that authority is not control, but order. Every office exists to serve Christ by serving people, not personalities.

Before you change anyone, get to know everyone:

- Their character
- Their maturity

CHAPTER 6: EMPOWERING LEADERS AND OFFICERS

- Their teachability
- Their spiritual fruit
- Their faithfulness to worship and giving.

Sometimes the loudest person wants influence. Often the quietest person carries the most integrity. Pray as Jesus did before choosing His disciples.

Key Leadership Roles Explained Clearly

Stewards

- Support the spiritual and financial care of the pastor and church
- Keep accurate accounts of all funds for ministry
- Must be spiritually mature and committed to the church's doctrine
- Think of Stewards as care and accountability with compassion.

CHAPTER 6: EMPOWERING LEADERS AND OFFICERS

Preacher's Steward

- Chair of the Stewards
- Ensures the pastor and family have necessary support
- Oversees financial collections for pastoral support
- Communicates with Stewardesses for pastoral needs
- Reports monthly to Pastor

This is a crucial role. Choose someone you can trust spiritually and practically.

Stewardesses

- Assist the Preacher's Steward
- Ensure the pastor's comfort and care
- Manage communion supplies and sacred hospitality
- These women hold a ministry of presence and support. It is not about serving a person, but honoring the office.

CHAPTER 6: EMPOWERING LEADERS AND OFFICERS

Trustees

- Govern the property and physical assets of the church
- Safeguard buildings, insurance, equipment, and repairs
- Sign financial documents as authorized officers
- Work closely with the pastor for good stewardship
- Trustees must be level-headed, ethical, and cooperative.

Class Leaders

- Maintain direct relational care with members
- Report needs, concerns, and spiritual status to the pastor
- Help the church grow through discipleship and accountability

This is biblical church care in its most personal form. When Class Leaders are active, no member goes unnoticed.

CHAPTER 6: EMPOWERING LEADERS AND OFFICERS

Selecting or Continuing Officers

Do not rush appointments. Observe first.

Healthy leadership changes happen:

- Prayerfully
- Communicated clearly
- In alignment with the Discipline
- With Quarterly Conference confirmation

Removing someone out of anger damages trust. However, removing someone because they are genuinely hindering ministry restores health.

If someone needs to step down:

- Be private and pastoral
- Affirm their past service
- Provide a path for restoration when possible
- Correction without compassion creates rebellion.
- Correction with compassion creates maturity.

CHAPTER 6: EMPOWERING LEADERS AND OFFICERS

Developing a Leadership Culture

Teach your leaders:

- Commitment is lived, not claimed
- Meetings require presence
- The pastor is not the only servant
- Gossip stops with leaders, not spreads through them
- Ministry excellence honors God

Give every officer clarity about:

- Their responsibilities
- Their boundaries
- How communication flows
- How to handle conflict biblically
- How accountability works

Your team needs to hear:

- “You are not just filling a position. You are fulfilling a ministry.”

CHAPTER 6: EMPOWERING LEADERS AND OFFICERS

Leaders rise to the level of expectation. If you expect excellence, model excellence. If you expect unity, demonstrate unity. If you expect service, serve with joy. Your leaders will reflect you.

CHAPTER 7: MEMBERSHIP CARE AND DISCIPLESHIP

People do not remain in church because of good preaching alone.

They remain when they are known, cared for, and spiritually led and fed.

A pastor's greatest responsibility is the souls of the people. The A.M.E. Zion Church gives us a discipleship structure through the Class System. It is a gift when practiced with intent. It ensures that every member has someone looking after their spiritual well-being.

Discipleship is not a program. It is a relationship.

Membership is not counting heads. It is caring for hearts.

The Purpose of Class Leaders Today

Class Leaders help the pastor:

- Maintain personal connection with members
- Identify needs early before people slip away

CHAPTER 7: MEMBERSHIP CARE AND DISCIPLESHIP

- Track spiritual growth, not just activity
- Ensure no one suffers in silence
- Provide encouragement and accountability
- Strengthen unity and belonging

When Class Leaders are active, the pastor is never alone in shepherding the flock.

Modernizing the System

Class Leaders should:

- Contact members regularly (call, text, visit)
- Check on families monthly
- Note who is missing from worship
- Pray with those who are struggling
- Report needs to the pastor confidentially
- Encourage consistent discipleship

Make the class system flexible enough for today's world.

Let leaders connect through methods that work for their class.

Monthly Class Leaders Meeting

CHAPTER 7: MEMBERSHIP CARE AND DISCIPLESHIP

Monthly Class Leaders Meeting

Required by the Discipline, but life-giving when done right.

Suggested agenda:

- Scripture and prayer
- Updates on members' health and needs
- Reports of visitations and follow-up
- Noting those who are missing or drifting
- New member progress and readiness for full connection
- Celebrating answered prayers and renewed faith
- Assigning care responsibilities where needed
- Keep these meetings focused on care, not gossip.

Build unity, not complaint circles.

Maintaining Membership Records

The Discipline requires:

- A proper church membership record
- Tracking preparatory and full member

CHAPTER 7: MEMBERSHIP CARE AND DISCIPLESHIP

- Reporting names and numbers at Annual Conference

Membership records matter because **lives matter.**

A practical system:

- Maintain a digital and physical list
- Update attendance and major life events
- Record contact attempts for missing members
- Review changes quarterly with Class Leaders

If you do not track who is slipping away... you cannot rescue them.

Integrating New Members Well

New members should experience:

- A structured orientation
- Introduction to the class system
- Assignments to a Class Leader early
- Scripture-based teaching
- Guidance into serving and spiritual gifts

CHAPTER 7: MEMBERSHIP CARE AND DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship begins immediately. People stay where they grow.

Care for the Whole Church

Ministry must touch every age and stage:

- Children need biblical foundation.
- Teens need identity and mentorship.
- Young adults need purpose and belonging.
- Seniors need honor and ongoing care.
- Grieving families need comfort.
- The sick need presence and prayer.

Your discipleship structure should reflect the diversity of the congregation's needs.

Pastoral Care Insight.

Some members do not leave because they are angry. Many leave because they are invisible. A call could have saved them.

A visit could have restored them. A prayer could have encouraged them. A leader could have held onto them. When every soul

CHAPTER 8: BUDGETS, STEWARDSHIP, & HEALTHY CHURCH FINANCE

matters, every soul is counted.

Money does not drive the mission. But without stewardship, the mission struggles. Finances are not simply about keeping lights on and bills paid. They are about how well we steward the resources God has entrusted to the congregation. When financial systems are clear, transparent, and accountable, the church can move confidently in ministry.

Your role as pastor is not to carry the financial burden. Your role is to lead the financial wisdom.

Spiritual Foundations of Stewardship

Giving is worship.

Budgeting is stewardship.

Accountability protects the testimony of the church.

Scriptures that guide financial leadership:

CHAPTER 8: BUDGETS, STEWARDSHIP, & HEALTHY CHURCH FINANCE

A healthy church budget includes:

- District assessments and Connectional obligations
- Pastoral salary and benefits determined by the Estimating Committee
- Church operating costs (utilities, insurance, software, maintenance)
- Worship and music needs
- Christian education and youth ministry
- Missions and outreach commitments
- Emergency and reserve savings

If all money goes only to survival, there is little room for revival.

The Estimating Committee

Per the Discipline:

- The pastor selects the committee upon arrival
- Together they determine the salary needed to support the pastor and family
- Their agreement is approved by a Special Conference

CHAPTER 8: BUDGETS, STEWARDSHIP, & HEALTHY CHURCH FINANCE

Scriptures that guide financial leadership:

- Malachi 3:10 (faithful giving and God's faithfulness)
- Luke 16:10 (faithfulness in little and much)
- 2 Corinthians 9:7-8 (cheerful giving and abundance for every good work)

Teach people the blessing of being a generous church.

We give, not to get rich, but to reveal how rich God already is.

The Budget Is a Ministry Plan

A budget is not just numbers. It is a reflection of:

- What we value
- What we support
- Where we believe God is leading us

Every dollar should have a purpose.

CHAPTER 8: BUDGETS, STEWARDSHIP, & HEALTHY CHURCH FINANCE

This protects both the pastor and the congregation. Salary is not meant to be a guessing game. It should be set with fairness, dignity, and reality in mind.

Stewards and Trustees: Partners, Not Rivals

Stewards oversee funds for ministry and pastoral support.

Trustees oversee property, assets, and legal responsibilities.

Pastor = CEO for mission

Stewards = financial ministry overseers

Trustees = financial asset protectors

Together, they keep the church ethical, safe, legally compliant, spiritually responsible. Unity between these boards creates financial peace. Division creates financial dysfunction.

CHAPTER 8: BUDGETS, STEWARDSHIP, & HEALTHY CHURCH FINANCE

Budget Presentation

- Bring printed copies for transparency
- Explain assessments and obligations
- Show income vs. expenses clearly
- Communicate any changes from last year
- Provide opportunities for legitimate questions

People support what they understand and help build.

Funding the Mission

Your budget can be supported through:

- Tithes and offerings
- Creative but respectful fundraising
- Special services and partnerships
- Grants and community collaborations when appropriate

Avoid overburdening the same faithful few. Plan giving strategies that multiply involvement.

CHAPTER 8: BUDGETS, STEWARDSHIP, & HEALTHY CHURCH FINANCE

Financial Boundaries for Pastors

To protect the pastor's name and the church's integrity:

- Do not handle loose money alone
- Avoid involvement in counting teams
- Do not personally loan money to the church
- Require two signatures on all checks
- Maintain strict record-keeping practices

Protections are not lack of trust. They are wisdom in accountability.

A Note from My First Appointment

The Discipline teaches that those who labor in the Word and in leadership are worthy of honor and support. Scripture reinforces it clearly in 1 Timothy 5:18 'For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

CHAPTER 8: BUDGETS, STEWARDSHIP, & HEALTHY CHURCH FINANCE

If you are fortunate enough to serve a church that has the capacity to provide your full salary and benefits, you should receive that support with gratitude, not guilt.

Never feel guilty about being paid fairly, having your needs met, or requesting clarity about salary, reimbursements, or housing considerations.

Your calling should not require your suffering to prove it is valid. Provision does not diminish your humility. It honors your obedience. Yet stewardship also calls for discernment.

When I received my first pastoral appointment, the Lord led me down a different path. For my entire first conference year, I chose to return my salary to the church. I continued to tithe faithfully. I did not request financial support. It was a faith walk.

CHAPTER 8: BUDGETS, STEWARDSHIP, & HEALTHY CHURCH FINANCE

My members were elderly. Most lived on fixed incomes. We mourned two members that first year. With only six active tithing members, the financial reality was stark. We still needed over twenty thousand dollars to meet District, Connectional, and Conference assessments, plus property, utilities, and ministry costs.

The needs of the flock were greater than the needs of the shepherd.

So, I made a decision for that season. Not as a mandate. Not as a measure of holiness. But as stewardship and compassion in the context God placed me.

And God carried us all the way through the year. This is important to understand that You may be called to sacrifice in one season. You may be called to receive in another. Both are obedience when led by God.

CHAPTER 8: BUDGETS, STEWARDSHIP, & HEALTHY CHURCH FINANCE

What matters most is ensuring that your leadership reflects love for Christ's church above personal expectation or entitlement.

Let your support align with:

- What God is asking of you
- The ability of the church
- The health of the ministry
- The building of trust in the first year

A caring shepherd considers the condition of the sheep.

A wise shepherd trusts the provision of the Chief Shepherd.

Never lead for money but always for ministry. God provides the provision for His vision.

CHAPTER 9: NAVIGATING PEOPLE, PAIN, & PASTORAL AUTHORITY

Welcome to the part of pastoring that cannot be found in any textbook.

People do not arrive to your church as blank pages. They come with:

- History
- Hurt
- Hope
- Habits
- Hesitations

Your leadership will be received through the lens of what they have already lived.

Some have loved their former pastor deeply. Some were wounded by leadership and are cautious.

Some are grieving a shepherd they never got to say goodbye to. Some have been leading in survival mode for years. Some are waiting to see if you are safe. Some never wanted a change.

CHAPTER 9: NAVIGATING PEOPLE, PAIN, & PASTORAL AUTHORITY

Your presence presses on their past. Your authority touches their trust. Your voice awakens their memories. Recognize what you walked into before you try to lead them through it.

Inherited Trauma Is Real

You may find:

- Suspicion where trust should be
- Silence where communication is needed
- Resistance where cooperation is expected

This is not always about you. It is about what came before you. Do not take offense when you are encountering someone else's history. You are not only stepping into a pulpit. You are stepping into a story.

Leadership With Compassion

Approach leadership like a loving but steady physician. Diagnose before you prescribe.

CHAPTER 9: NAVIGATING PEOPLE, PAIN, & PASTORAL AUTHORITY

Ask the Lord:

- Where is this congregation hurting?
- Who is discouraged or disconnected?
- What wounds still bleed beneath the surface?
- Who feels forgotten, overlooked, or unheard?

Isaiah 61:1 reminds us, the Spirit of the Lord
anoints us:

To bind up the brokenhearted.

Binding takes time and touch.

Your Authority Is Already Established

Your appointment establishes your authority.

But your relationship establishes your
influence.

You do not have to:

- Prove who you are
- Announce your title
- Demand submission
- Flex your role

CHAPTER 9: NAVIGATING PEOPLE, PAIN, & PASTORAL AUTHORITY

Let your **consistency**, your **character**, and your **care** speak louder than your position. Authority is a gift from God. Influence is earned from people. Hold both with humility.

When Conflict Arises

Friction does not mean failure.
Sometimes resistance is a sign of growth.

When you must correct:

- Be calm
- Be biblical
- Be clear
- Be private when possible
- Be fair always

Never use the pulpit as your personal soapbox.
Never weaponize humiliation.
Correct the problem, not the person's dignity.

Healthy Boundaries Protect You and Them
Boundaries are not walls.

CHAPTER 9: NAVIGATING PEOPLE, PAIN, & PASTORAL AUTHORITY

Boundaries are doors with prayerful hinges.

Protect your:

- Home
- Family
- Peace
- Study time
- Emotional capacity

Set expectations early:

- When you are available
- How to schedule important conversations
- What issues require leaders first
- How communication will happen

A pastor without boundaries becomes burned out or bitter. Neither condition blesses the flock.

When You Are Criticized

If Jesus was, you will be too. Remember, reactions to criticism reveal your maturity. Truthful criticism grows you. False criticism

CHAPTER 9: NAVIGATING PEOPLE, PAIN, & PASTORAL AUTHORITY

strengthens you. Gossip gives you a prayer assignment. Do not let temporary opinions distract you from eternal work.

When Grief Is in the Room

If the congregation loved their former pastor, they may grieve you before they ever know you. Give space for:

- Memories
- Tears
- Transition
- Healing

You are not asking them to forget. You are asking them to move forward... with you. Invite testimony of God's faithfulness across pastoral generations. Honor the past while leading the future.

Pastoral Leadership Insight

You were not sent to compete with anyone who came before you.

CHAPTER 9: NAVIGATING PEOPLE, PAIN, & PASTORAL AUTHORITY

You were sent to continue what God started.
Your assignment is not comparison. Your
assignment is consistency.

Lead with grace. Lead with patience. Lead with
courage.

The hearts you heal today become the hands
that help you tomorrow.

Cultivating a Culture of Hospitality and Welcome

The heart of a shepherd is revealed not only in
preaching but in how we welcome and care
for God's people. Hospitality is a biblical
mandate and a spiritual expression of the love
of Christ within the church community.

Practice hospitality.

Romans 12:13

When we arrive as newly appointed pastors,
one of the first opportunities we have to build
trust is through warmth, respect, and

CHAPTER 9: NAVIGATING PEOPLE, PAIN, & PASTORAL AUTHORITY

compassion. The people may not know your preaching style yet, but they can feel your spirit. A welcoming presence reassures them that their new pastor sees them, values them, and is committed to walking with them.

Hospitality begins with you, but it cannot end with you. It becomes a culture when leadership participates and the congregation follows.

Key places where hospitality must be visible:

- The Sanctuary: Ushers and greeters should extend sincere welcome, especially to visitors who may already feel out of place.
- The Pulpit and Platform: How you acknowledge clergy guests, Presiding Elders, and District leadership reflects respect for the wider Zion family.

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- The Fellowship Area: Warm conversation, inclusion at the table, and genuine interest in others builds community.
- The Homes of God's People: Pastoral visits to the sick, elderly, and grieving communicate care that cannot be delegated.
- Small churches may feel they lack resources to provide hospitality, but they often possess a priceless strength: personal connection. A heartfelt welcome, handwritten card, shared meal, or thoughtful phone call can be more memorable than elaborate programming.

As pastor, you set the tone by:

- Learning names quickly
- Following up with visitors within 48 hours
- Checking regularly on the sick and shut-in
- Representing Christ's joy when greeting the people

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- Honoring people's life moments: birthdays, losses, achievements

Your accessibility matters. Not that you must be available at all hours, but you are available with your heart. Your presence becomes a ministry of healing for people who have endured transitions, losses, or wounds from previous leadership.

Hospitality reminds the congregation that they are more than a number on a roll. They are God's flock. They are a family. And they deserve to feel welcomed, known, and loved. The true measure of our ministry is not how well the church receives us, but how well we help the church receive others.

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Hospitality also extends beyond the local congregation. As A.M.E. Zion pastors, we are part of a connectional body. Bishops, Presiding Elders, General & District officers, and guest ministers visit our churches for the good of the work. How we receive them communicates how we honor the church we serve.

When your Presiding Elder or other clergy arrive, let them feel:

- Expected, not surprised
- Respected, not tolerated
- Honored, not burdened

A clean and prepared sanctuary is a must. Parking and seating accommodations should already be arranged. Greeters should be aware in advance of who the guests are and greet them by name if possible. Reserved seating should be visibly and respectfully marked. Honor does not have to be expensive to be excellent.

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If the church is hosting a district meeting, revival, or fellowship service, remember:

- You set the atmosphere with your spirit
- The congregation follows your posture and tone
- Hospitality is part of worship, not separate from it

Feeding guests is a long-standing Zion tradition, whether a full meal or light refreshments. When budgets are tight, creativity matters. A well-organized team can stretch limited resources with grace and dignity. Presentation matters because it shows intentional care.

Also remember, hospitality includes communication. Keep your leadership informed:

- Who is coming
- What the purpose is
- How the church can serve well

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Confusion creates frustration. Preparation creates peace.

A culture of hospitality says:

"You are welcome here. We have been expecting you. We are honored by your presence."

Hospitality is a witness. People may forget a sermon, but they will remember how they were treated when they walked through your doors.

Jesus put it this way:

"Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to Me."

Matthew 25:40

When we welcome others with love, we welcome Him.

CHAPTER 10: PREACHING, TEACHING, AND WORSHIP LEADERSHIP

The pulpit is a sacred place. Not a platform for opinion. Not a stage for personality. It is the table where the Bread of Life is served.

Pastors preach and teach not to impress, but to transform.

You are called to rightly divide the Word of Truth with:

- Faithfulness to Scripture
- Reverence for the Gospel
- Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit
- Understanding of the flock you serve

The sermon should connect the Word to their daily walk.

Finding Your Preaching Rhythm

Every pastor has a different preaching style, but every sermon should be:

- Biblically grounded
- Christ-centered

CHAPTER 10: PREACHING, TEACHING, AND WORSHIP LEADERSHIP

- Spirit-led
- Clear and applicable

Avoid:

- Preaching at people instead of feeding them
- Using the pulpit for personal correction
- Overcomplicating the message
- Preaching only emotional highs without spiritual depth

Leave them with something they can live, not just something they can shout about.

The Pastor as Spiritual Teacher

Teaching establishes what preaching announces.

Preaching often inspires.

Teaching anchors discipleship.

Bible Study and Christian education should:

- Grow scriptural literacy
- Encourage questions and spiritual curiosity

CHAPTER 10: PREACHING, TEACHING, AND WORSHIP LEADERSHIP

- Develop disciples who can disciple others
- Equip people for real-life faith

A church that shouts on Sunday but struggles to live on Monday needs teaching.

Worship Leadership and Liturgical Presence

Worship is not entertainment.

Worship is our offering to God.

Your role:

- Guide the congregation into reverence
- Honor the historic identity of A.M.E. Zion
- Allow the Spirit freedom to move decently and in order

Work collaboratively with:

- Musicians
- Choir members
- Worship leaders

Clear communication prevents chaos.

Last-minute frustrations disrupt worship flow.

CHAPTER 10: PREACHING, TEACHING, AND WORSHIP LEADERSHIP

Plan your worship. But let the Spirit breathe into it.

Sacramental Leadership

Pastors administer:

Baptism and Holy Communion. These are holy moments that:

- Tie the church to its covenant identity
- Celebrate our unity in Christ
- Reflect our theology in visible form

Explain the meaning. Guide the congregation in reverence. Make space for every person to experience God's grace.

Funerals and Weddings

You are present at the pivotal moments of life. In funerals:

- Comfort the brokenhearted
- Preach hope rooted in resurrection
- Ensure dignity and compassion guide the entire experience.

CHAPTER 10: PREACHING, TEACHING, AND WORSHIP LEADERSHIP

In weddings:

- Prepare the couple spiritually
- Lead with pastoral wisdom
- Reflect God's covenant love

These moments build trust and connection in the community.

Planning Your Preaching and Teaching Calendar

Consistency will sustain you. Plan ahead:

- Preaching themes or series for growth
- Communion Sundays
- Liturgical season observances (Advent, Lent, etc.)
- Annual events and revivals

Advance planning:

- Gives you time to study deeply
- Keeps you from burnout
- Builds anticipation in the congregation

CHAPTER 10: PREACHING, TEACHING, AND WORSHIP LEADERSHIP

Be intentional in scheduling:

- • Rest days
- • Study days
- • Sabbatical rhythms
- • Family protection time

A rested shepherd feeds well. A weary shepherd snaps easily.

Pastoral Leadership Insight

The Word you preach is the Word you must live. Let your pulpit message match your private devotion. Let your teaching flow from fellowship with Christ.

Let your leadership be shaped by time on your knees. A preaching pastor fills the sanctuary. A praying pastor fills the people. A surrendered pastor brings revival.

CHAPTER 11: THE PASTOR AS ADMINISTRATOR

Pastors are not only spiritual leaders. We are also administrators. The ministry that happens on Sunday depends on the systems that run Monday through Saturday.

Administration is not separate from spirituality. It is spirituality **organized**.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:40 that everything in worship and leadership must be done decently and in order.

Order is ministry protection. Managing Your Time and Priorities. Your weekly rhythm should create healthy structure:

- Dedicated study and sermon preparation time
- Regular office or communication hours
- Scheduled pastoral care visits
- Administrative days for reports and planning
- Rest and renewal time for yourself and your family

CHAPTER 11: THE PASTOR AS ADMINISTRATOR

If you do not schedule your time, someone else will. Say yes with wisdom. Say no with peace. Everything urgent is not important.
Documenting What Matters

The Discipline requires proper records because records protect:

- Church history
- Pastoral accountability
- Membership integrity
- Legal and financial standing

Keep accurate records for:

- Membership rolls
- Baptisms and funerals
- Weddings and premarital counseling
- Financial reports
- Facility maintenance and insurance
- Attendance trends and ministry engagement

CHAPTER 11: THE PASTOR AS ADMINISTRATOR

Document spiritual progress too:
People's transformation is the real church growth.

Communication Is Leadership
A church that does not communicate well becomes a church full of confusion.

Establish clear communication channels:

- Weekly or monthly update emails
- Printed announcements and bulletin boards
- Group texting systems when appropriate
- Clear chains of communication through auxiliary leaders
- Calendar updates accessible to everyone

Repeated communication prevents repeated misunderstanding.

Say important things:

- Early

CHAPTER 11: THE PASTOR AS ADMINISTRATOR

- Clearly
- More than once

Silence creates space for rumors.

Clarity creates unity.

Meetings With Purpose

Meetings should move ministry forward:

- Have an agenda
- Stay focused
- Start and end on time
- Clarify who is responsible for each next step
- Assign deadlines and follow ups

Meetings that do not produce ministry are just gatherings.

Legal and Financial Protection

Administration also safeguards the church by:

- Ensuring proper insurance coverage
- Verifying two signatures on checks

CHAPTER 11: THE PASTOR AS ADMINISTRATOR

- Securing sensitive files properly
- Reviewing contracts before signing anything
- Following all annual reporting requirements
- Keeping clergy taxes and payroll documents accurate

Good administration prevents bad accusations.

Delegation Is Strength

You are the pastor. You are not:

- The secretary
- The trustee board
- The choir director
- The janitor
- The only solution to every problem

Delegate with expectations:

- Responsibility
- Timeline
- Follow-up

CHAPTER 11: THE PASTOR AS ADMINISTRATOR

- Empower others to serve in their gifts so you can serve in yours.

Protecting Your Well-being While Leading Well

Burnout does not glorify God. Busyness is not fruitfulness.

Schedule:

- A weekly Sabbath
- Vacation time
- Personal time with your family
- Boundaries around unhealthy expectations

You are called to lead people to green pastures. Do not die in the desert trying to prove you are strong.

Leadership Insight

Administrative excellence is not secular work. It is spiritual stewardship. The pastor who handles God's business well, will see God entrust them with more kingdom work.

CHAPTER 12: STAYING HEALTHY WHILE LEADING WELL

You are a pastor, but you are also a person. A spouse. A parent. A friend. A child of God. Your identity is not limited to your assignment. Ministry is rewarding, but it can also be draining.

People will pull on you relentlessly if you do not guard your well-being. Your longevity depends on boundaries, rhythms, and rest.

Your Spiritual Life Comes First

Your first ministry is not to the people. It is to God.

Your second ministry is your family.

Your congregation comes third.

If your private altar is neglected, your public ministry will eventually feel empty.

Protect:

- Your devotional time
- Your prayer life

CHAPTER 12: STAYING HEALTHY WHILE LEADING WELL

- Your study outside of sermon preparation
- Your personal worship

A shepherd cannot lead people to green pastures while living spiritually dehydrated.

The Power of Saying No

Pastors often feel guilty saying no. But no is a holy word when your yes is destroying you.

Say no when:

- It compromises your Sabbath
- It undermines your family time
- It creates resentment instead of service
- It tries to make you God instead of pointing people to Him.

You cannot meet every need personally. Jesus can. Point them to Him.

Healthy Relationships and Support

Do not isolate yourself. You need:

- Ministry friends outside your church
- A mentor who can speak into your life

CHAPTER 12: STAYING HEALTHY WHILE LEADING WELL

- A counselor or confidant if trauma or stress builds
- People who see you as a person, not just a pastor

You cannot pour out continuously if you are never poured into.

Even Moses needed Aaron and Hur to hold up his arms.

Managing Criticism Without Crumbling

You will be misunderstood. You will be talked about. You will be praised one week and doubted the next.

Do not let compliments crown you. Do not let criticism crush you.

Check for truth. Learn from it. Release the rest back to God.

Rest Is Not Laziness

God rested.

Jesus withdrew. Elijah slept before receiving his next assignment. Exhaustion is not

CHAPTER 12: STAYING HEALTHY WHILE LEADING WELL

a spiritual gift. Schedule a real weekly day off, regular vacations, time to enjoy life and laugh again. A rested pastor leads with joy. A fatigued pastor leads with frustration.

Avoid the Trap of Performance

- You are not called to:
- Impress the Presiding Elder
- Outdo the previous pastor
- Prove your worth to members
- Earn people's acceptance
- You are called to be faithful. Your validation comes from God. Serve with energy. Lead with humility. Live with grace.

Continuing to Grow

Leadership development does not end with ordination.

Commit to growth through:

- Reading
- Classes and conferences
- Peer learning groups

CHAPTER 12: STAYING HEALTHY WHILE LEADING WELL

- Spiritual direction
- Evaluating what worked and what didn't

Final Encouragement

Take care of the pastor God called you to be.
Not the pastor people try to turn you into. Love
well. Lead well. Rest well. Serve well. Finish well.

SCRIPTURE CHARGE

“Then I will give you shepherds according to
My heart,
who will feed you with knowledge and
understanding.”

Jeremiah 3:15

You have been sent, not hired.

Appointed, not positioned.

Called, not convinced.

May the Word of God remain your anchor,
your wisdom, and your unshakable truth.

CLOSING BENEDICTION AND PASTORAL CHARGE

May the Lord bless you with wisdom beyond your training.

May He fill your heart with compassion that sees every soul.

May your voice proclaim truth with boldness and humility.

May your hands carry healing with gentleness and strength.

May your leadership be steady in storms and joyful in peace.

May your family be protected as you serve God's family.

May every room you enter feel the presence of Christ within you.

May your sermons stir revival, and your prayers sustain it.

May the Holy Spirit guide every decision, comfort every burden, and renew you daily.

And when this year is complete, **may you hear** God whisper... **"Well done."**

In Jesus' name. Amen.

CALLED TO SERVE BY REV. DR. SYBIL KEARSE

APPENDIX A: TEMPLATES AND TOOLS

2. Quarterly Conference Preparation Checklist

Two Weeks Before QC

- ☐ Notify all officers of deadline for reports
- ☐ Review previous QC minutes
- ☐ Confirm insurance documentation and property records
- ☐ Update membership roll and changes (baptisms, deaths, transfers)
- ☐ Confirm completion of Connectional and District obligations

One Week Before QC

- ☐ Collect all reports (written and signed)
- ☐ Meet briefly with major boards (Stewards, Trustees)
- ☐ Review pastor's report and prepare spiritual highlights
- ☐ Ensure financial records are accurate and transparent

APPENDIX A: TEMPLATES AND TOOLS

Day Of

- ☐ Printed packets ready: minutes, pastor's report, board reports
- ☐ Secure seating order near Presiding Elder
- ☐ Devotion text chosen and shared with secretary
- ☐ Confirm roll call list
- ☐ Prayer for peace, unity, and a productive spirit

After QC

- ☐ File signed minutes
- ☐ Communicate decisions to congregation as needed
- ☐ Follow up on any action items assigned

APPENDIX B: HELPFUL REFERENCES

Core A.M.E. Zion Resources

The Doctrines and Discipline of the A.M.E. Zion Church

Know Your Church

A.M.E. Zion Hymnal

Supports worship identity rooted in Zion tradition.

The Star of Zion

Connectional newspaper that keeps pastors informed and connected.

Connectional Departments

- Global Missions
- Christian Education
- Home Missions and Church Growth
- Lay Council
- Women's Home & Overseas Missionary Society
- Varick Christian Endeavor Society

These departments provide conferences, webinars, curriculum, grants, and training.