

ON BEING THE SENIOR PASTOR AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BERKELEY  
by Earl Palmer

I want to describe in this paper some of the more important visions and tasks that I see as the ingredients of the senior pastoral task at FirstPres; but before I sketch in that outline, I want to describe myself in a more basic fashion. More important than the tasks which I am seeking to do or accomplish and work toward, is the person I want to be by the grace of God.

I want to be a growing disciple of Jesus Christ on the day-to-day journey of my life. I want to be a supportive and loving life-partner to my wife and father to our children. I want to be a balanced, healthy and rhythmic person who knows how to work hard, to rest, to play. These goals that I have for my own life I also feel are sound objectives for my ministry among the people of God. The question I always want to ask is this: What is actually happening in the lives of the people in our congregation in terms of their relationships with the Lord, with each other, and their inner growth as individual human beings? Then a second question is this: How are God's people affecting the world in which we live: by the way we live, by what we believe, by how we think, by the way we pray?

My goal as a pastor is to encourage God's people toward a growing daily discipleship, and to welcome into this family of God's people those who have not known the Lord and His love. The tasks I now describe, each in different kinds of ways, are dedicated to fulfilling these goals of evangelism, edification, and mobilization. The specific responsibilities of the Senior Pastor:

(1) Preaching in the church: The Senior Pastor's first mandate is to develop a whole and balanced philosophy of the overall direction and goal of the Sunday morning preaching, and in relationship with the Minister of Music and program staff a total sense of the goal for the Sunday morning worship experience of the Church. Extensive study time must undergird this task (presently two days per week).

(2) The Senior Pastor is senior colleague among colleagues in the staff of the Church. He has the challenge and responsibility of encouraging and supervising the individual staff persons in terms of their particular ministries within the Church. This task requires time for interpersonal supportive relationships and time for structured staff meetings.

(3) The Senior Pastor is Moderator of the Session, and in this role he exercises shared leadership in the spiritual oversight, strategy and planning mandates of the Church in its life and ministry. Management and administrative skills are very helpful for this task, but the most important ingredient is the ability to share vision and to encourage vision that emerges within the fellowship.

(4) The Senior Pastor is a pastor of the people on a day-to-day basis, along with the other members of the staff. This involves hospital visitation, counseling, parent instruction for baptism of infants.

(5) The Senior Pastor is a teacher in the congregation. He teaches courses during the year within the Church, that is adult education, youth program, and also in such ecumenical settings as New College.

(6) The Senior Pastor carries on a ministry beyond the immediate boundaries of the congregation by means of membership on the Committee on Ministry of Presbytery, Board of Trustees of Princeton Seminary, the Ethics Committee, Herrick Memorial Hospital, Board of Trustees, New College Berkeley. The Tape Ministry of Berkeley Tapes is another example of this extension ministry, and the publication of books and articles, and also by speaking opportunities in places outside of Berkeley.

OUTSIDE SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EARL PALMER IN 1985:

- Jan. 7-10 Presbyterian Congress on Renewal, Dallas, TX. I led a seminar on The Case for Expository Preaching.
- Jan. 14-17 Mount Hermon Pastors Conference. I was the Bible expositor at this conference and offered four studies in the Gospel of John.
- Jan. 30, 31 Founders Day Convocation, Bethel College, Minneapolis. I spoke at this occasion on Exposition Preaching and gave two plenary addresses: The Meaning of Work, The Meaning of Love.
- Feb. 5-8 Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL. I spoke each morning and each evening to the students at Wheaton. The evening series were Studies in I & II Corinthians. The mornings were Studies in the Gospels.
- Feb. 25 - Youth for Christ Europe, Rotterdam, Holland. I presented five studies on The Theology of Faith, and I also presented two seminars, The Christian Worker as a Professional and The Christian Worker as a Person.
- Mar. 1
- Apr. 23-26 The Consultation on Biblical Exposition, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena. I will speak at the gathering on Biblical Exposition and also lead a workshop on biblical sermon building.
- Apr. 30 East Bay Young Life Banquet
- May 4 San Francisco Young Life Banquet
- May 22-24 Logos Bookstores National Conference, San Francisco. I will be the Bible teacher for this meeting.
- June 3 This will be my study leave. (Each third year I am away for the summer for writing and teaching ministry.) I will be giving week-long lectures at two different places during this summer: China Graduate School of Theology, Hong Kong - June 9-13; London Institute of Contemporary Christianity - July 21-28.
- through  
Aug. 27
- Sept. 23-25 Geneva College, Ohio. I will be at this college for a three-day lectureship.
- Oct. 14-17 Princeton Seminary Center for Continuing Education. I will present a three-day pastors seminar at this center.
- Nov. 5-7 Mount Hermon Adult Conference. I will teach at this two-day adult conference at Mount Hermon.