A Guide to Writing

MINISTER RESUMES

Overview:

An appropriate resume can be a useful tool as you seek God’s place of service. It is not the final determiner, but it is what gets your foot in the door—so it is of vital importance. Do NOT try and tell your entire life story. Instead, present a snap shot which will lead to a search team wanting to pursue you further through surveys, listening to your online sermons, investigating your references, and even an interview. You can always include additional information in a cover letter.

Here’s some suggestions, with explanations, for parts of your resume.

1. FORMATTING

A **clean looking** resume, uncluttered and with plenty of white space, is essential. Choose a plain, professional font (this paper is done in Times New Roman) and use a .12 font size. Don’t change the design of the paper as you go along. Every subheading, for instance, should be the same size and font. Your word order should stay the same for similar areas. For instance, in your work history, if you start with the job title, then the place of employment, followed by the years of employment—use that same order for every position you list. A maximum of two pages (not counting references) is preferred.

1. HEADING

This section should simply be your name and **full** contact information. It is unnecessary to increase the font size or to put “RESUME” at the top of the page. It is essential that you include personal email and phone contacts. Do not use a current work email, as it may create questions of your work habits and personal ethics with a Pastor Search Committee. If you have a personal email that is quirky, or shared with your spouse, you may also eliminate yourself from consideration. Therefore, get rid of foxyatforty@hotmail or [danandkaren@perfectmatch.com](mailto:danandkaren@perfectmatch.com). Something like yourname@yourhost.com will be adequate.

Sample:

Rev. John Smith

777 Heavenly Home

Any Place, TX 77777

[johnsmith@gmail.com](mailto:johnsmith@gmail.com)

214-555-1234 (cell)

972-123-4567 (home)

1. PICTURE

In a secular resume, one would never add a picture because that’s not considered professional, and it leads to concerns about bias based on gender, race, and age. On the other hand, a professional service like LinkedIn allows for pictures because personalizing an applicant is a real plus. So, right by your heading, you might want to consider posting a nice picture of yourself. You might even have one of you and your spouse, or you and your whole family. But only ONE picture.

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1. OBJECTIVE

The very first thing in your resume should be whatever sells you the most. Generations ago, seminaries taught that your personal information should go here. No, no, no! Personal information is allowed and encouraged for ministry resumes (again, you wouldn’t include personal information in a secular position resume), but it should be almost last, just before your references. An objective statement MAY be what belongs here. There is debate over its usefulness, but many churches like to see that you are specifically pursuing a call that matches the church’s opening. 1) Be brief. You do not need your life story or the story of your call to ministry included here. 2) Be specific. Your objective must match the position you are seeking. Don’t write a one-size-fits-all objective for a resume. Stay away from “any position God calls me to.” That’s neither impressive or helpful.

Sample:

**MINISTRY OBJECTIVE**

God has called me to serve as the pastor of a local Baptist church. I seek to continue to use the  
gifts He has given me for a life of service in a ministry of pastoral care and preaching.

1. WORK HISTORY

For most people, one’s history in ministry will be the biggest selling point. You might want to narrow down the sub-title for this area and call it “PASTORAL MINISTRY” or “MINISTRY EXPERIENCE.” Note: 1) Paragraphs are OUT. 2) Use SHORT bullet points. 3) Include the position title, name of employer (church), location, and dates of employment. 4) Share some highlights of accomplishments or about duties. 5) Don’t exaggerate. 6) The format of each past position should look just like all the rest (punctuation, order, etc.). 7) Put in reverse chronological order (most recent, first). 8) If you have a long history, put details about the most recent few, and summarize the rest in a single point. 9) If you have a gap in ministry years, you can explain it later in “OTHER EMPLOYMENT” or “SECULAR EXPERIENCE.”

Sample:

**PASTORAL EXPERIENCE**

**Pastor, First Baptist Church, Leftfield, Texas (2014–Present)**

* Average Sunday morning attendance has grown from 200 to 235
* Worked to help create first policy/procedure manual for church
* Supervising three full-time ministers
* Church recognized in top 10% of Cooperative Program giving churches in BGCT

**Pastor, Faith Baptist Church, Centerfield, Texas (2012 – 2014)**

* Average Sunday morning attendance: 125
* Followed long-tenured pastor
* Church created new vision plans and statement
* Church downsized staff to fit budget
* Coached the remaining staff and rebuilt the team
* Established new deacon ministries

1. EDUCATION

This may come earlier, if you are a first-time minister who has formal education but no significant ministry experience. If you are an experienced pastor, it is probably not quite as important as your experience, even if you have a doctorate. Non-degree educational experiences likely go in some other area. Do NOT include high school information. Place in reverse chronological order.

Sample:

**FORMAL EDUCATION**

* + Master of Divinity, B. H. Carroll Theological Institute, Irving, Texas (2011)
  + Bachelor of Arts (Major: Religion), Dallas Baptist University, Dallas, Texas (2007)

1. OTHER

Everyone is different, so there’s no telling what other areas you might include to highlight significant experience, background, and achievements—if you need to include them at all. Some possible other areas might include: Awards, Secular Experience, Volunteer Work, Mission Trips, Denominational Service, Other/Continuing Education, Proficiencies, Publications, or Certifications. What other information would help a PSC know a little more about you?

Sample:

**ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCES**

* Active Peer Group Member, Young Ministers Group, BGCT
* Mission Trip Volunteer to Peru (2007-2009)

**PAST DENOMINATIONAL INVOLVEMENT**

* Board Member, *The Baptist Standard* (2010-Present)

1. PERSONAL

Again, you don’t want it first (like in so many bad examples that still copy an archaic format), but it can be important.

Sample:

**FAMILY/PERSONAL INFORMATION**

* Wife: Debbie Doolittle, married since 2009, school teacher
* Children: David (age 6) and Ruthie (age 3)
* Hobbies: Bike riding, reading, travel, guitar
* Ordination: Columbus Avenue Baptist Church, Waco, Texas (2010)

1. REFERENCES

Do NOT put “references available upon request.” Include them. Make the PSC’s job easier for them (it can pay off!). Make sure people on this list 1) have given their permission and 2) know first hand about you, your history, and your gifts—or some specific area they can speak to. It is embarrassing for a reference, for instance, to have to confess they have NEVER heard you preach or seen you perform ministry first hand. Three to six are plenty.

Sample:

**REFERENCES:**

Rev. Mick Keith Ms. Jan Mann Dr. Jack Sprat

Address Address Address

City, ST ##### City, ST #### City, ST #####

Email Email Email

Cell Phone Home Phone Work Phone

Pastor/Fried Church Member Professor

1. **NEXT?**

Now that you have a resume, what’s next. Send it out, of course, but send it out only after careful thought. You need to A) find open positions and B) find out if the position is appropriate for you. Don’t just blanket the open-church market blindly with your resume. Many, if not most, churches accept self-applicants, but you might get more serious consideration if someone appropriate refers you. A network of people who know candidates’ gifts, and can testify on their behalves, is probably the most likely way pastors and churches find each other. But turn every stone. Use your alma mater’s placement office. Check with places that list openings: denominational offices, religious publications, websites, etc. Let everyone you can safely tell know that you are seeking a position. Then, just as you should be honest on your resume, be honest in your conversations and interviews. A GOOD MATCH is more important that just landing a job. A BAD MATCH can destroy the church you are called to, destroy your family, and end your service to the Lord. And of course: pray, seek prayers from others, and maintain your own spiritual health so you will hear more clearly from the Lord.

What follows is a short EXAMPLE of a resume, utilizing this guide. It is NOT meant to be a template, but use it however it will help you. Customize it to fit your personality, background, purpose, and calling. May God bless and direct you as you seek His will for your life and a church that matches the Lord’s call in your life.



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**MINISTRY OBJECTIVE**

God has called me to serve as the pastor of a local Baptist church. I seek to use the gifts He has given me for His service in a ministry of pastoral care and preaching. I have pursued this call with serious academic preparation and significant experiences in ministry that have equipped me for this ever-changing world of church service.

**CHURCH EXPERIENCE**

**Pastor, First Baptist Church, Leftfield, Texas (2014 – Present)**

* Average Sunday morning attendance has grown from 200 to 235
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* Church recognized in top 10% of Cooperative Program giving churches in BGCT

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**EDUCATION**

* + Master of Divinity, B. H. Carroll Theological Institute, Irving, Texas (2011)
  + Bachelor of Arts (Major: Religion), Dallas Baptist University, Dallas, Texas (2007)

**ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCES**

* Active Peer Group Member, Young Ministers Group, BGCT
* Mission Trip Volunteer to Peru (2007-2009)
* Retail Management (2007-2011)
* Youth Minister, part-time at three churches (2005-2011)

**DENOMINATIONAL INVOLVEMENT**

* Messenger to BGCT Annual Meetings (2012-Present)
* Board Member, *The Baptist Standard* (2010-Present)
* Averaging 10 hours annually of continuing education in preaching and pastoral care (2007-present)
* MinistrySafe Trained (2018)
* Speaker, Truett Seminary Chapel (2016)

**PERSONAL**

Wife: Debbie Doolittle, married since 2009, high school math teacher

Children: David (age 6) and Ruthie (age 3)

Hobbies: Bike riding, reading, travel, guitar

Ordination: Columbus Avenue Baptist Church, Waco, Texas (2010)

**REFERENCES**

Rev. Mick Keith Ms. Jan Mann Dr. Jack Sprat

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Email Email Email

Cell Phone Home Phone Work Phone

Pastor/Fried Church Member Professor