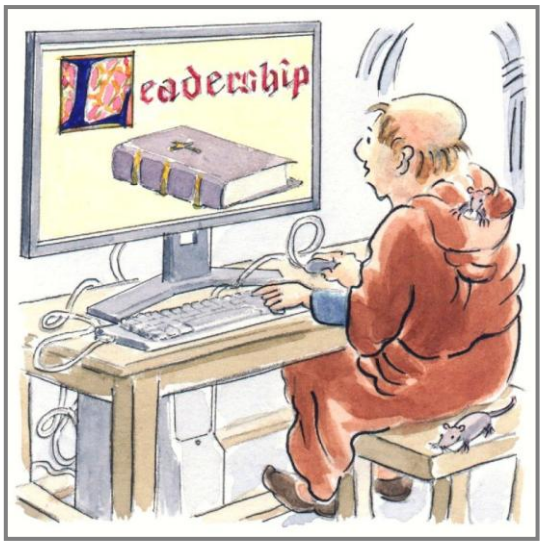
john truscott
church consultant and trainer



What you look for in your Minister

TN132 Training Notes series: Leadership

These notes were first published on the website in June 2021 and last updated in August 2025. They are copyright © John Truscott. You may download this file and/or print up to 30 copies without charge provided no part of the heading or text is altered or omitted.

The following is based on many years' experience of interviewing church members.

This is deliberately not a list of selfish 'wants': such as someone who will make church exactly what you want it to be. Anyone can ask for a Minister who gives them their desires in terms of worship styles, teaching and, above all, growth and 'success' but, of course, without any painful change.

Nor is this an attempt to describe the Angel Gabriel: that perfect person with the perfect family to create the perfect church.

No, this ten-point list assumes church members who are fair, perceptive and generous, recognising that different Ministers have different gifts and personalities.

If you are a church member

This list is not to be used to berate your present Minister. In the first place you might like to see how well you match up to these requirements yourself.

Then it is vital to appreciate that any Christian Minister has a role to play that is very different from what most other people are used to. Theirs is not a Monday to Friday job with a weekend off in a different home environment.

They have to minister in a very public setting with, often, no choice on their housing. They may live in areas where schooling for children poses real problems, where the doorbell is always ringing or in a street prone to vandalism and anti-social behaviour. They may have to cope with high levels of emotion in their work, see death frequently and be expected to be up-front, in a role where they will be judged by congregation and local community alike.

This list may however give ideas for a person specification on a church profile. There is, deliberately, no mention though of a sense of humour!

So use this list to pray for your Minister and to seek to understand some of the pressures he or she is working under. There will be one set of pressures if married with a young family, and a quite different set if single or a one-parent family.

If you are a Minister

The following list is not intended to raise levels of guilt or sow seeds of despair! But it is a list that takes as its starting point what thoughtful church members have told me they hope for in their ordained leader.

No one will match this perfectly, but the list has been chosen because every Minister can aspire to and work towards some feature of each item described. The only gift selected is that of teaching, because this is the one listed for elders in 1 Timothy 3:2.

The list may need some adjustment for the leader of ten small rural communities when it is simply not possible for one Minister to give everyone the time that they might expect.

Nor does it allow for the large church where managing a staff team may mean that the role of Senior Minister has to be somewhat more removed from day-to-day pastoral work.

The above examples are of structures of ministry that may not exactly fit what follows. So think in terms of one church in a range from, say, 50 to 250 members.

For everyone

I hope this is an accurate analysis of what church members tell me they appreciate in their Minister if this is what they see, or long for in their Minister if these points are absent.

All apply irrespective of gender but, to give variety and to save clumsy language, odd numbered points are addressed to a male Minister, even numbered points to a female Minister. The choice of odd or even is not deliberate, and the order in which these come is not important.

We want you to:

1 Love people

The Minister makes it obvious by all he does that he loves people. He seeks to get to know and understand members of the congregation and builds relationships, including with those who cause him problems and people of all ages. He seeks to remember names and current concerns at school, work and home.

He stays around over coffee after services or meetings and catches up with visitors and members of the congregation, not just those he knows best. If he has a poor memory, he devises systems that enable him to remember personal information well. He is genuinely interested in people's welfare.

2 Be available

The Minister is approachable and people of all ages can talk to her without fear while at the same time holding her in due respect. She seeks to relate to all sectors of the congregation: children and the elderly, male and female, rich and poor, newcomers and old hands.

She visits people when they are ill or phones if she cannot visit; she takes a real interest in those who are struggling. She is visible in the local community and does not hide behind her study door but at the same time can be seen to protect her own time and her family.

As far as her personal circumstances allow she seeks to be hospitable, inviting people into her home and garden. She is flexible enough to make time for urgent pastoral needs without this causing her great stress.

3 Model Christian character

The Minister has a high quality of character, modelling the Christian life in all the messiness of daily business. He is seen to put into practice any actions he preaches on such as outreach. He is not perfect and is honest about his struggles, without using the pulpit to vent his personal frustrations or problems.

He clearly makes prayer a high priority for himself and for the church. He is seen to work hard but to take proper time off. He is neither lazy nor workaholic and, even if misunderstood by some, is held in high regard for his consistency in life.

4 Communicate vision

The Minister inspires the membership through her clearly held and articulated vision of what might be, even if this gives people a real challenge. She communicates this clearly and holds it with consistency, even if the church is struggling or there are major disappointments.

She has a big picture view of the church and the Kingdom and yet at the same time is seen to be humble enough to help out when there are chairs to be put out or the washing up to do or a church works day on the grounds. She can be seen to understand where people are at, rather than living in a make-believe world.

5 Demonstrate a gift for teaching

Although he knows, and others appreciate, that his gifts do not cover all areas of ministry, the Minister is respected for his preaching ministry which encourages, inspires and challenges the congregation. He has clearly taken trouble to study and prepare carefully and this shows.

He can relate Bible teaching to people's lives today and has excellent illustrations. He is seeking to build disciples, not keep a show on the road or manage a 'successful' church. He can balance the needs for preaching, small groups and one-to-one ministry and encourages these elements of church life. He is also able to use other gifts in ministry.

6 Become a respected leader

The Minister seeks to be a leader who is respected more than one who is popular. She is not afraid to tackle issues that many churches sweep under the carpet. She is prepared to face conflict even if at a cost. She listens carefully, especially to lay leaders, welcoming other views than her own and taking them on board. She is firm but not feared. She apologises when she messes up.

She also seeks to have a presence in the local community by any appropriate means. She makes herself visible through local presence, social media and community involvement, rather than hiding behind the study door.

7 Seek to be a team player

The Minister shares his leadership with an appropriate group, loves to see others blossom in ministry and respects those with greater gifts than his. He is open to advice and has been known to change his mind when he felt he had made a bad call. He drops in on events and meetings led by others and encourages and supports those to whom he delegates.

He is not afraid to take difficult decisions but works by sharing leadership with others and respecting their views, even when they are different from his. He understands how to lead a team and rejoices to see others flourishing in the faith.

8 Maintain passion as a disciple

The Minister is passionate about Jesus and the Gospel. She never stops being amazed at its truth and longs for everyone else to see this in the same light, building the kingdom. But she carefully avoids giving the impression that she has a hot line to God.

In all the busyness of her ministry she makes priority time for developing her own faith through personal study and prayer, through training events and through retreats or national events for her spiritual health.

9 Live an ordered life

He may not be a gifted administrator but the Minister has reasonable ability to manage his own diary, not to forget appointments, to keep his promises and to live without undue panics. He may use a PA or Administrator to help him or have those who can help him manage his time well, but he acknowledges this need.

His study may not be perfect but it is reasonably tidy and he replies to messages, emails and voicemails without undue delay. If work overwhelms him he is able to develop means to enable him to cope.

He seeks to deliver on deadlines, to claim expenses on schedule and to handle his own finances and tax in a competent way, making use of advisers as necessary.

10 Be accountable

This is a point with contemporary overtones. In an age of safeguarding the Minister needs to be clearly accountable, not isolated in a structure or head of a hierarchy with nothing above.

She needs to be seen to be accountable to the church in question through being part of a leadership team with regular reviews, or being accountable to Trustees or, in the case of most traditional denominations, through the external structures of Moderators, Bishops or other senior staff. She is prepared for her ministry to be reviewed by others and seeks to learn from what these show up.

Exercise

For yourself and your church, put these in a priority order in three categories of about equal number each:

- Essential
- Highly desirable
- Important.

Are there other features you might add to the list?

For Ministers: are there any of these ten features where you feel you need help? Where can you find this?

These notes should be read alongside other Training Notes on this website:

TN28 *No two leaders are the same*
TN78 *The role of a church leader*
TN87 *What to look for in your leaders*

These notes are available at https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes-index then TN132. See also the three sets of Training Notes listed above and alsoTN70, *Do's and don'ts for a new leader,* TN94, *Becoming self-aware,* TN112, *Set my leaders free!,* and TN120. *Lessons for leaders.*

John's resources are mrked for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication and Administration. File TN132 under Leadership.

John Truscott, 24 High Grove, St Albans, AL3 5SU
Tel: 01727 568325 Email: john@john-truscott.co.uk Web: https://www.john-truscott.co.uk.