



VIGNETTE

Call Me Pastor Amanda

By Amanda Ross

I am a Licensed Local Pastor, 27 years old and in seminary. Being a first-time pastor and learning how to define myself as the pastor in two rural churches can be quite difficult. On the one hand, I think it is important for the congregations to respect my authority as the pastor; but at the same time I understand that these small churches have been around longer than I have been alive. I want to be sensitive to local customs while claiming my pastoral role.

My first Sunday at one of my churches, a church member walked into the annex to welcome me. While I was talking with her, she asked, "What should we call you?" I replied, "Pastor Amanda is fine with me." She then said, "Well, Brian [the previous pastor] let us call him by his first name." So I simply said, "That would be fine to call me Amanda; however, I would like you to introduce me as 'Amanda, our pastor' to those I have not met."

Realizing this would be an important interaction with the congregation, I began my first Sunday introducing myself by saying, "Hello. I am Amanda, the new pastor." In this way I did not step on anyone's toes. I was able to be relaxed with the congregation and at the same time state my position in the church.

One bump I ran into was that a few of the children started calling me Amanda. So, with them, I responded by saying, "Pastor Amanda." Then I answered their questions. Vacation Bible School has been the best at getting names right because even the adults want the children to show respect by using titles of respect, such as Mr. Smith or Mrs. Jones. So around the children, the adults started calling me Pastor Amanda, a habit that has allowed them to feel comfortable in calling me Pastor Amanda when the children are not around!

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