How Many Hats?

by

Richard Koehneke

How Many Hats?

I’m thinking about the area of ministry that I know best: parish pastor. What I’m about to write has parallels, I’m sure, in other ministries in our church body. I leave it to others to contemplate those possibilities. My question here is simply this: How many hats does the pastor wear? Consider the following:

Nobody but a politician does more public speaking than a pastor.

Nobody but a CEO participates in more administrative decisions than a pastor.

Nobody but a psychologist does more counseling than a pastor.

Nobody but a doctor makes more hospital visits than a pastor.

Nobody but an undertaker conducts more funerals than a pastor.

Nobody but a teacher teaches more classes than a pastor.

Nobody but a justice of the peace officiates at more weddings than a pastor.

The list could go on. Can you think of any to add?

To add further complexity to the picture: The congregation that the pastor serves could be fewer than a hundred or several thousand people – in a city, in a suburb, in a rural setting – with people who are dirt poor or filthy rich, so to speak – and every other variable that you can think of. The way that pastoral ministry happens varies widely (as it should) from place to place, from setting to setting. There is no such thing as “THE parish ministry.” There is parish ministry, or local church ministry as some prefer to call it, but each ministry is unique.

One of my early mentors in ministry told me, “There is no other profession in which you can stay in the same ‘business’ and have the possibility of doing so many different things.” In parish ministry, the pastor can use every spiritual gift and natural talent he has. That’s the agony and the ecstasy of parish ministry. You can use everything you’ve got, and then some. It’s agony when you feel totally stressed out and exhausted. It’s ecstasy when you see and feel that delicious connection between what you have to offer and what the ministry needs.

The pastor wears many hats, but he has one Head: Jesus Christ. Serving Him – the One who gave His all for us and for our salvation – is a great and wondrous joy.