

A NEW LOOK AT MINISTRY RESUMES (for clergy and lay professionals)

**By
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For clergy and lay professionals seeking a new position, the resume is a key document in the placement process. It is, along with CDO Profile, a prime determinant of whether or not it will be seriously considered for a new position in the church.

When preparing to update your resume, it is important to realize that there two basic types of resumes. One is the standard chronological resume. This lists your previous positions in reverse chronological order, starting with your present position. A chronological resume is effective in terms of listing exactly where you were when. Unfortunately, a chronological resume is less effective in communicating clearly the nature of your gifts and abilities for ministry.

A second type of resume is a functional resume. A functional resume lists particular gifts and abilities (i.e., administration, outreach, pastoral care, stewardship), along with noteworthy achievements under each. A functional resume is effective in communicating the gifts you bring to ministry. Unfortunately, it is less effective in communicating clearly when you were when – one of the major strengths of the chronological resume.

Combined Chronological and Functional Resume

Those who are preparing to update their resumes, and wanting to combine the major strengths of both the chronological and the functional resumes, may wish to consider a combination of the two¹. A combined chronological/functional resume allows members of a search committee or interviewing team to perceive quickly and accurately both the chronology of your career as well as the gifts and abilities you bring to ministry. It also has the advantage of corresponding to the major sections of the CDO profile. Thus your resume and your CDO are all of a piece, communicating a coherent picture of your total ministry.

1. A model for such a combined resume is described by author Yana Parker in her book, The Damn Good Resume Guide, available in most book stores, and by order from Ten Speed Press, Box 7123, Berkeley, CA 94707. Parker's book is

recommended in the best selling career guide, What Color is Your Parachute?, by Episcopal priest Richard Nelson Bolles.

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In preparing to update your resume, please refer to the two sheets accompanying this article. Place the sheets next to each other, with the sample resume on the right. Refer to these as we discuss the specific portions of your resume, as they correspond to your CDO profile.

How Long Should Your Resume Be?

Before you begin, a major question is, how long should your resume be? Studies in the industry have shown that potential employers spend an average of 30 seconds perusing your resume. Probably this is true for church interviewing teams as well. For this reason, your resume needs to be clear, focused, and to the point. For those just starting out, probably a one-page resume is sufficient. The more experienced can justify an expansion to two pages. **However, under no circumstances should your resume be longer than two pages**, and even the experienced will find that they are able to distill the sense of their experience into one page, if they are clear about what they want to convey.

Ministry Objective

The first major section of your resume, and, ironically, one often omitted, is in the Ministry Objective. This appears immediately below your personal data – name, address, and telephone number. The Ministry Objective describes, in your own words, the nature of the position you are seeking. It corresponds, in a general way, to the Personal Ministry Statement on the CDO profile. The Ministry Objective can be used to answer three major questions:

- What is the position you are seeking (i.e., rector, vicar, associate, staff member, institutional ministry)?
- (If a parochial position) What is the size of the church you want to serve (i.e., family, ministry program, or corporate)?
- What are the gifts you bring to ministry (i.e., communications, teaching, administration, stewardship, etc., from the Ministry Specialties section on your resume and of your CDO profile)?
- In composing your own personal Ministry Objective, prayerfully consider questions such as those posed above. In wording your answer, focus on the needs of the church, rather than your own personal needs. For example, your objective is “to serve a church with a need for fine Christian formation” rather than “to express my teaching skills”. A subtle distinction, but nevertheless important. When you are done, state your Ministry Objective in a form such as that on the next page.

Ministry Objective

Rector of a program-size church
with a need for enhanced stewardship,
program development, and new member incorporation.

Summary of Qualifications

This section has no direct equivalent on the CDO profile. Here you list three or four highlights of your ministry, including perhaps your level of experience, one or more particularly strong gifts for the ministry, and one or two specific achievements drawn from the Ministry Specialties section, below.

Ministry Specialties

List three of four major skills areas, along with concrete examples of each. Use facts and figures to back up your claims whenever possible. It is much more convincing to a search committee to read that you “increased giving in your present church 10 percent a year for each of the last five years” than it is to say that you “placed a major emphasis upon stewardship education.”

Employment History and Education

List previous positions and education in reverse chronological order. You do not need to describe in detail your previous accomplishments under each position, as you have already done this in sufficient detail earlier on your resume.

Getting Started

In summary, effective paperwork alone will not determine whether you are successful in getting called to a new position. You need also a solid record of accomplishment in your present position, as well as effective interviewing skills and the other qualities that tend to characterize a successful candidate. However, preparing your resume and CDO profile is the first step in the process which may ultimately lead to a new chapter in your ministry.

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Christopher Moore was a Deployment Officer in the Diocese of New Jersey, and is the author of: Opening The Clergy Parachute, a practical manual for clergy seeking a new position, published by Abingdon Press in 1995, and What I REALLY Want To Do.... How To Find The Right Job, published by CBP Press in 1989.

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MINISTRY OBJECTIVE

Rector of a program-size parish with a need for enhanced stewardship, program development, and new member incorporation.

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- 11 years experience in parish ministry
- Increased stewardship in present church 50% in 5 years
- Led parish in major programmatic expansion
- D.Min. in evangelism and new member incorporation

MINISTRY SPECIALTIES

Stewardship

- Increased giving in present church 10% a year for each of the last 5 years
- Drafted a stewardship education program now used in 6 area churches
- Chaired denominational stewardship committee for last 3 years

Program Development

- Added a senior high group to the youth program
- Started the first men's group to the youth program
- Expanded the church's outreach ministries

New Member Incorporation

- Initiated a newcomer lay visitation program
- Increased attendance 25% over the past 5 years by improving incorporation procedures
- Wrote an article, "The User Friendly Church", for the July/August, 1991, issue of Your Church

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

1987 – Present	RECTOR – St. Andrew's, Providence, RI <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 300 members, 3 paid staff, \$118,000 budget
1984 – 87	ASSOCIATE RECTOR – St. Luke's, Barrington, RI <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared responsibility for general parish ministry
1981 – 84	CURATE – Grace, Maple Bluffs, NJ <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible for Christian education and youth ministry

EDUCATION

D.MIN. Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, MA, 1988 (Area of concentration: New member incorporation).

M.DIV. General Theological Seminary, New York, NY 1981

B.A. Muhlenburg College, Allenton, PA 1972

Keep personal information simple: for confidentiality, you may want to use your home address and phone as the contact.

Summarize your sense of call. Be specific. Describe the nature of the position you are looking for, expressed in terms of the needs of the church or other employing organization rather than your own personal needs.

List 3 to 5 items which summarize the essence of the ministry you would bring to a new call. Make sure the items you list are consistent with your “Ministry Objective” and your “Ministry Specialties”.

Use action verbs to describe your most significant accomplishments under each of 3 or 4 Ministry Specialties. Cite specific facts and figures whenever possible. Include also significant accomplishments outside the parish.

List work experience in reverse chronological order, starting with the present. Note church size and/or particular areas of responsibility, if important.

You can also list workshops, seminars, and other non-degree programs, especially as they relate to the “Ministry Specialties” you claim above.