

# WHEN YOUR PREACHER LEAVES: Interim Services for Churches Between Ministers

January, 2008, #19



Jerrie Barber and John Parker



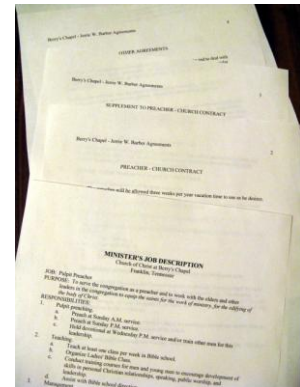
---

## Contracts: Why? and How? by Jerrie Barber

One of the frequent requests I receive is, “Do you have a sample of a contract that you could send?” I am glad to do that > [click here](#)

But why does a church and a preacher need a contract? We’re Christians aren’t we? We’re honest aren’t we? We trust each other don’t we?

The first two congregations where I preached, I did not have a written agreement. We talked about some things, omitted some important issues, and recorded nothing to which we could later refer. When I took my first week off, to my dismay, I realized that we had not discussed vacations. After some conversation, one elder said, “He didn’t do nothing. Don’t give him nothing.” I discussed that with the next congregation and had a verbal agreement that I would have two weeks vacation each year with pay. I had learned an important lesson: don’t assume.



However, as I was preparing to leave this congregation, a question came up in a men’s meeting one night: “Jerrie is running around, trying out about every other Sunday. Are we paying him on the Sundays he is gone?” I was asked to explain.

“Yes, I am being paid”, I replied. “When I came here eight years ago, the elders and I agreed that if either of us decided it was time to terminate our relationship, I would be given ninety days with pay or until I found another congregation, whichever came first.” During those eight years, two of those elders had died. The third one had resigned.

Someone asked the resigned elder, “Is that the way it was?” He said, “It seems like we talked about that, but I don’t remember what we said.” I was in an embarrassing situation. After some discussion, a deacon who had been with the congregation since its beginning and who was the treasurer said, “Brethren, we have had that agreement with every preacher we have ever had and that is the way we will treat Jerrie.” The person who had asked the question was satisfied.

That was close. What did I learn from that? Contracts, job descriptions, and written agreements are not just for dishonest people. They are for good Christian forgetful people, for people who die, and for people who value relationships and harmony too much to leave it to chance and fragile memory. I had people suggest that it is not very spiritual to require a contract and a signature: “Back in my Daddy’s day, people made agreements and shook hands. Their word was their bond.” That’s fine if it worked for your Daddy. However, I have seen the truth in the Chinese proverb, “The palest ink is better than the best memory.” God must not have thought that writing an agreement was unspiritual. He has been recording His covenants with man for thousands of years. Yes, some of it was even written in stone.

What do you include in a church-preacher contract? Here is what was included with the last congregation where I was the regular preacher:

1. Title.
2. Purpose in the role.
3. Specific responsibilities – the more detailed, the less chance for misunderstanding later. A good agreement is preventing conflict before it arises.
4. Contract which includes days off, vacations, time away for meetings and other speaking appointments, other agreed activities outside the boundaries of the local congregation, and how much time should be given to terminate this agreement.
5. Supplement to the contract which I hope will change each year due to salary adjustments. This is where salary, fringe benefits, and other important agreements are recorded. I like to differentiate between a cost-of-living adjustment and a merit raise. A cost-of-living adjustment just keeps me at the same level as I was last year. It is not a raise. A merit raise indicates I am doing better and am being recognized for that. I like to have the understanding that I don’t have to have a merit raise, but we have to talk about why I did or did not receive one. If I get it, why? If I didn’t get a merit raise, what could I do to get one on the future?
6. Other agreements include items that are important to the relationship such as
  - a. How will we relate to each other?
  - b. As to meeting with the elders, will the preacher be permitted, required, or barred?
  - c. Will moving expenses be provided? How much?
  - d. How will we make changes to this agreement?

Observations on contracts:

1. They should be mutually negotiated. Both parties should spend time, thought, and prayer about what is important to a good working relationship. They bring their

- requests and convictions to the meeting and start talking, clearing up vague points, eliminating conflicting wants, and confirming mutual desires.
2. My experience is that many times people forget what they said. In more than four decades of preaching, I have reminded elders of agreements on raises, evaluations, and working relationships. They have referred to our contract on time away and when that is to be scheduled. When it is written, it is easy to give “book, chapter, and verse.”
  3. This document is living and changing as the relationship changes. As with the original document, the changes should be written and signed.

I have found it very satisfying in my relationship with elders to have the security of a record of our understandings. If you have questions, comments, or criticism, I will be glad to hear from you: [jerrie@barberclippings.com](mailto:jerrie@barberclippings.com) .

For a sample: > [Go here](#)

---

## Shakespeare Quotations for Ministers by John Parker

They are as sick that surfeit with too much as they that starve with too little.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE. 1.2

It is a good divine [minister] that follows his own instructions; I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than to be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE. 1.2

A hot temper leaps o’er a cold decree.  
[A hot temper ignores a rational rule or law.]

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE. 1.2

The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE. 1.3

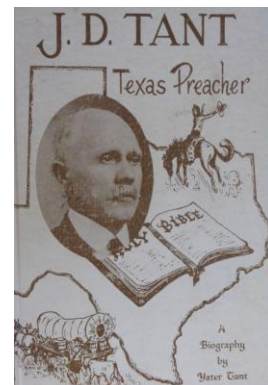


---

## Mustard Seeds from Favorite Books, Jerrie Barber

*J. D. Tant – Texas Preacher*, by Yater Tant, Copyright 1958 by The Gospel Guardian Company.

This is a book I read in a short time and have reread portions of it many times when I was tempted to get the “whines” because of the “tough life of a preacher.” I usually was back to gratitude after a few of the following “mustard seeds:”



“At the age of fourteen while still in Georgia, I joined the Methodist Church, and began preaching for them when I was nineteen. At fifteen years of age, with my parents, I moved from Georgia to Texas. About this time I became interested in an education, and fortunately was located near a high school; but unfortunately I had only one dollar to supply all my earthly needs. I invested that dollar in three yards of cloth, from which my mother made me a pair of pants. I started to school. There were no free schools in Texas then. I did not have a single school book, and began my education with only one pair of pants. At school I would dodge around the children and study my lessons on their books with them, until one day a school-mate cursed me and told me that if my old daddy could not get me any books, I had better quit. This discouraged me, and I stated my troubles to my teacher, who agreed that he would leave one window unfastened each night, and for me to come and get all the books containing my lessons for the next day, learn my lessons, and put the books back next morning before school. This I did for two years, and many times would three o’clock in the morning find me after my lessons with a little brass lamp to study by.

“Days came and went. I was in the school room all day and never looked at a book – yet at the recitation time I seldom missed answering all questions. The children begged me to tell them how I knew my lessons without studying. This I kept as a profound secret, and the news soon spread that I was an idiot. As this seemed to be so near my nature, I acted my part well. People often visited the school, anxious to see “old man Tant’s idiot boy that learned his lessons without studying.” This I kept up for two years, at the end of which time an old lady heard of my desire for an education, sent for me, and loaned me twenty dollars to buy my school books. The last two years I was in school I was in a class alone. I had passed all the other students – not because I had more ability, but because I used what I had (pages 26, 27).

“As to myself, I followed music teaching and farming and breaking wild horses for a living, getting \$5.00 a horse for each one I would break to ride. I preached all summer in protracted meetings, besides each Lord’s day near my home in crop time. I have held many a protracted meeting and picked 300 pounds of cotton each day, then preached each night for two weeks at a time” (pages 34, 35).

“We went to Willis, Texas, and had a grand meeting. Brother Harvey told them of my condition, and told me that the pupils had run off two teachers before that time, and they had some fears about my being able to control them. I told them I could teach the school, but they might have to employ two doctors to wait on their children, as I proposed to be manager of the school.

“At the close of the first month I had whipped thirty-two children and proved to them that I was equal to the occasion. During the two years I taught there, I seldom did any more whipping. I remember the last outbreak; I whipped five grown young ladies one day and a married woman. The trustees came to me and wanted me to sign a contract to teach the school five years and build up a first class school. But I learned that if I did, quite a number of men intended sending their wives to school, and for fear I might get into deep water I quit the school forever after the second term. In addition to my school salary I was paid \$92.00 for my preaching that year, which was a considerable advance

over my first four years” (pages 44, 45).

“I found no church of Christ here. There has been a digressive church here for ten or twelve years and I found some members who had been faithful elsewhere had gone in and worked with these digressives, because there was no church of Christ here. I also found that the unscriptural things which were first tolerated by said members with a protest were now almost fully accepted; for it takes only a few years for a man to accept any innovation if he will only work with said innovation. Here is where many members are deceived. They think if they will go in and work with members who have accepted innovations, they can convert them. They might as well pour water into the river to make it run upstream, or hire a saloon-keeper to run his bar to try to reform him, as to endorse the work of the digressives in order to reform them. Many of the prophets and apostles were considered kickers, yet none of them ever engaged in heathen worship to reform the heathen” (pages 276, 277).

I will give additional quotes next month from this well-used book.

---

### Smile of the Month



Gardeners have a much more realistic view of life. They point out that weeds and kids have a lot in common. They come into this world when you least expect it, grow up overnight and are very hard to control. On the other hand, you don't have to keep weeds in shoes (Orben's Current Comedy, Issue #502, Volume 27, No. 3).

---

### Barber Clippings

We have started a leadership class, God's Great Servants. We study Leadership Prayers. We practice Leadership Projects, dealing with situations that come up for elders and deacons. We discuss Leadership Principles, many of which I have not heard discussed openly. Our conclusion is Leadership Mustard Seeds: what did you learn tonight about God, leadership, group interaction, and yourself?

Jerrie Barber

[jerrie@barberclippings.com](mailto:jerrie@barberclippings.com)

[www.barberclippings.com](http://www.barberclippings.com)

<http://barberclippings.blogspot.com/>

(615) 356-8371

P. O. Box 630

Eddyville, Kentucky 42038

Church phone: 270-388-7948

Cell phone: 615-584-0512

---

John Parker

I am currently presenting Power Point lessons on the Classic British hymns, January through February at the Granny White church in Nashville at 6:30 p.m. These feature pictures that I took at hymn sites in England in summer 2007.

John H. Parker

[Johnparker22@aol.com](mailto:Johnparker22@aol.com)

[www.interimcofc.com](http://www.interimcofc.com)

(615) 373-4462