

10

THINGS PASTORS SHOULD KNOW BEFORE BUYING A BUS

By Bob Anderson

Most pastors spent many years in school studying theology, Biblical literature, counseling or a number of other topics that would equip them to be effective ministers of the Gospel. But very few are equipped to make an informed decision about the transportation needs of their congregations.

As someone who spent 25 years in full-time pastoral service and is now employed by the nation's largest volume bus distributor, allow me to offer my best tips.

10. In most states, a *Commercial Driver's License (CDL)* is not required to operate any vehicle that seats 15 or fewer people (including the driver) and weighs less than 16,000 pounds. Have you tried getting 15 adults into your 15-passenger van lately? They won't fit! The good news is that vehicles offering 14 individual seats plus a driver are available.

The convenience of not needing a CDL-licensed driver for a 15-passenger bus is definitely something to consider.

9. *The National Transportation Safety Board has declared that 15-passenger vans are extremely unsafe, and they recommend that mini-buses be used instead.* There have been more than 1,500 deaths involving these vans in the past 10 years. In fact, these vehicles are so unsafe, that in many states, it is illegal for a car dealership to sell a 15-passenger van to a school or church.

8. *These should be considered minimum safety requirements:* a) **Dual rear wheels** — This means that there are four tires on the rear axle, which creates great stability; and b) **steel-cage construction** — Be sure there are steel beams placed every few feet in the side walls and in the roof. Also, seat belts are *not* usually a standard feature with most bus distributors, so choose a company that includes these.

7. *It usually takes 90 to 120 days to receive something that has to be ordered.* But, in some cases you can find exactly what you're looking for "in stock," which often can be delivered in seven to 10 days.

6. *Most buses come equipped with the same standard features as a family car* — power steering, power brakes, cruise control, tilt wheel, stereo system, etc. There's also a long list of available options such as electric entrance door, upgraded cloth, reclining seats, overhead parcel bins with reading lights and much more. Customized graphics probably can be added at little or no extra cost.

5. *The most common chassis warranty is 3 years/36,000 miles.* Service work on the chassis can usually be performed at a local car dealership (same model). Ask about "non-chassis" related issues.

4. *Front and rear air conditioning is usually a standard feature.* However, in 15-passenger buses with dual compressors, the second compressor is usually not covered under the chassis warranty. The only company who can do warranty work on the second compressor is the one that installed it. I recommend 15-passenger units with a second "condenser" (skirt-mounted) and *not* a second "compressor." This *is* covered by the manufacturer's warranty.

3. *Answers to your questions are often just a phone call away.* Use a toll-free number and ask for the sales manager, parts manager, service manager or warranty manager. Ask for an information packet that provides pictures, specs and other pertinent information about the types of vehicles you're considering.

2. *There's no universal pricing with buses.* There's often a significant difference in products (both new and used). Partner with people you trust. The faithful stewardship of His resources is important.

1. *There are many styles and sizes of buses.* Help the salesperson understand what types of ministries a bus purchase would facilitate. Tell them the age of the people who would use a bus the most. Will this be used for a school? Daycare? Youth ministry? Senior adult trips? Do you have individuals who might need a wheelchair lift?

It's instrumental that you explain what features are most important to your congregation.

You probably never attended a college class entitled Bus Purchasing 101, but I hope you're now better-equipped to purchase a bus that meets your needs.

Bob Anderson is the national sales manager for ChurchBus.com. He has more than 20 years of pastoral ministry experience in the Church of the Nazarene, but — through what he calls "some incredible, and suspiciously God-ordained," events — Anderson took a break from pastoral ministry to begin this new type of ministry. Visit www.churchbus.com or call 888.353.2192.



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