

Introduction to the Pastor Congregation Relations Packet

Respectful, appreciative and trusting relationships between pastors and congregations are vital to the health of the church. But they do not come about without attention and intention. The materials in this packet are designed to strengthen and support relationships that are empowering and fruitful for all parties.

The best structure for dealing with issues that arise between pastor and congregation is a committee assigned to this task—the Pastor-Congregation Relations Committee (PCRC). Ideally a committee is appointed specifically to do this; but in some smaller congregations the task may be assigned to a committee that has other agenda (e.g., the church council—but not such groups as the elders/deacons who themselves need to be involved in doing the work of ministry). The least preferable option is to divide these duties amongst several committees. Whatever structure you choose, this packet is addressed to all those responsible for or concerned about pastor-congregation relations.

The Bible (e.g., 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus) addresses issues like calling and supporting a pastor, dealing with conflict, authority and power, character and expectations of church leaders, salaries and accusations of misbehavior. But the biblical texts do not answer all the questions that we ask 20 centuries later. Pastors, congregations and PCRC often request additional counsel and resources. This packet compiles some policies and tools that address those requests. These documents were originally written by a variety of persons (noted at the end of each document) who have experience, training and wisdom to guide the work surrounding pastor-congregation relations. Their willingness to share their wisdom and expertise is deeply appreciated.

This packet is one in a series of resources provided by the ministerial leadership staff of the Mennonite Church to assist congregations, pastors, conference ministers/overseers/bishops and conference ministerial leadership committees. Other packets available to date are:

Ministry Transitions: The Candidate Version (discernment tools; Ministerial Leadership Information Form; interview guide, etc. to help in finding a pastoral placement)

Ministry Transitions: The Congregational Search Committee Version (discernment tools; Congregational Information Form; interview guide, etc. to help in finding a pastor)

Ministerial Credentialing (resources to guide the process of discernment for licensing and ordination of pastors, including an interview guide). These materials and others (such as the guidelines for discipline of pastors, e.g., for sexual indiscretion) can be ordered from either of the denominational offices. These materials are available on the Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada websites at www.mennoniteusa.org and www.mennonitechurch.ca

Many other resources address the issues that are touched on in these documents. Area conference ministers/area church minister or denominational staff would be pleased to offer recommendations. One valuable resource for these and other issues is *Congregations and Pastors: Reflections on the Work of the Church* (Faith and Life Press/Herald Press, 1999), a collection of 100 brief articles by John A. Esau originally published in *Mennonite Weekly Review*.

Further assistance in strengthening the relationship between pastors and congregations is available from the conference minister's office of any area conference of the Mennonite Church.

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