



Mennonite Church
USA

Mennonite Church
Canada

Annual Accountability Plan for Credentialed Ministers Serving Within the Mennonite Church

The intent of this accountability plan for credentialed ministers is to offer one way to be more intentional in the growing relationships of our ministerial role. Its purpose is to provide an opportunity for us to plan our ongoing spiritual formation, our professional development, and how we will maintain appropriate boundaries.

General Guidelines

1. This plan is intended for and designed for your benefit. We hope it will be a resource for you to clarify and work toward your own goals. As each ministering person is a unique person serving in a unique setting, we want you to be creative and include what is already working for you as you design your accountability plan. Keep your plan as a guiding vision for your own growth.
2. This material is designed to help you attend to your “being” as a person and your “doing” as a ministering person. We hope that by fulfilling this expectation, you will also contribute to your well-being and overall health and functioning.
3. After you have sent your annual growth and accountability plan to our office, it will be placed in your file. Your cooperation with this may also be included in any future letters of reference that we are asked to make on your behalf.
4. If you have any questions about this accountability plan or need assistance in designing your plan or finding someone with whom to be in an accountability relationship, contact your regional church/area conference minister. They can also help you if you are interested in a peer group.
5. The worksheet is meant to assist you in making your plan. It is not intended as a form for you to return. The written response that you submit may cover additional areas not included on the form. Remember, this is a resource to guide your reflections. Be sure to put your name on what you return to your regional church/area conference office and make a copy for your future reference.
6. Your growth and accountability plan should be returned annually to the regional church/area conference office by January 1.

Accountability Expectations of Credentialed Persons

We believe that strong and clear patterns of accountability will:

- contribute to the spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental health, and the general well-being of those who are credentialed for ministerial leadership within the Mennonite Church,

- increase the effectiveness of those engaged in credentialed ministries,
- serve as a restraint on the potential abuse of professional power, and
- contribute to the vitality and health of the congregations and ministries that are served by those credentialed within the Mennonite Church.

To clarify and strengthen accountability patterns, the Ministerial Leadership Committee expects credentialed persons serving within our regional church/area conferences and who are active in ministry, to prepare and present to the regional church/area conference minister an annual accountability plan. The following elements should be included in this plan (Note: this does not apply to persons officially retired or otherwise inactive):

1. *Your relationship with God: spiritual vitality and relationship with the church.* What are your goals for your spiritual growth and formation in the coming year? What are the practices that will help you achieve these goals? How does or how might the church help to nourish your spiritual life?
2. *Your relationship with yourself: physical, intellectual, and emotional health.* What are your goals for nurturing your personal health and well-being in the coming year? Consider your physical, intellectual, and emotional health, time management, exercise, and dietary habits, etc. What are the practices that will help you achieve these goals?
3. *Your relationships with your family and friends: spouse and children (if married), family of origin, and other relationships important to you.* What are your goals for nurturing healthy relationships with your family, including your family of origin, and other significant persons in your life? What are your plans for financial management and the stewardship of resources? What are the practices that will help you achieve these goals?
4. *Your relationships to the world in which you live.* What are your goals for involvement with the community, institutions, and society outside the church? How will you express your care for the earth and the environment? In the midst of great human diversity, how will you broaden your relationships with those of other racial, ethnic, and religious origins? What are the practices that will help you achieve these goals?
5. *Your relationship to the practice of ministry.* What are your goals in professional development toward increased effectiveness as a ministering person? What is your continuing education plan, and what other practices and resources will nurture your calling and help you achieve these goals?
6. *Identify the person or group of persons to whom you will be accountable for these goals and practices.* This person might be a ministerial colleague, spiritual director, spiritual friend, and/or professional supervisor. Indicate how often you intend to meet with this person or group to review how you are doing regarding the goals and practices you have outlined above.
7. *Accountability in your ministry setting.* In addition to the items specified above, identify the accountability pattern within the local congregation or ministry setting where you are now serving. Keep in mind that we all live and work within multiple accountability structures. In *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership* (page 55-57), identify general principles of accountability.
 - a. Identify the group within the context of ministry to whom you are responsible and accountable for your functioning in ministry. This could be a pastor-congregation relations committee, a church council or board, or elders. If there is more than one accountability relationship here, what is unique about each?

- b. Identify a specific person or group with whom you will regularly and systematically review boundaries and appropriate conduct in relationship to others. This may be someone within your ministry setting or someone from outside of it.
 - c. Describe the process by which your ministry is reviewed in your ministry setting. This might include a pattern for pastors that would involve a major review every three years and a less comprehensive review every year.
8. *Annual Update.* This accountability plan will be updated and submitted with the regional church/area conference minister annually. It will be due in the regional church/area conference office by January 1 of each year. When the regional church/area conference minister has received and reviewed your accountability plan, you will receive a confirmation of the same. This might include a ministerial credential card confirming your credentialed standing within the Mennonite Church.

Suggestions for Developing a Personal Accountability Plan

1. Consider using a focused time of retreat to develop your plan. Self-consciously seek God's direction. Surround this time with prayer, worship, and reflection on where you have been and where God is leading you. Pray that God would direct and bless this accountability process.
2. Be creative and flexible. Design a plan that fits who you are and your calling. Make changes as you go along. Incorporate what you are already doing and consider incorporating practices and disciplines that you may have previously dismissed or been reluctant to try.
3. You might try to write a personal mission statement. What is it that you want to do with your life over the next five, 10, 25 years?
4. Another alternative would be to use the following structure:
Vision statement—deals with defining identity issues and the quality of your commitments.
Mission statement—answers the questions: what do I do? whom do I serve?
Goals statement—identifies the major items you want to accomplish in your ministry in the next five to 10 years, perhaps during your tenure as pastor of this congregation.
Objectives statement—clarifies what it is you intend to do today and tomorrow or this year, in order to achieve the goals, to fulfill your mission, and to realize the vision.
5. Be as specific and as personal as possible. Making specific, concrete, and measurable commitments facilitates accountability.
6. Ask someone who will be honest with you to give feedback about your plan. Is it honest? Is it specific enough? Is it realistic and manageable?