

SECTION

5

PASTORAL
RELATIONS
COMMITTEE

Preface

THE OPENING PARAGRAPH to “Building a Leadership Team – a Governance Manual for Local Churches says it is “designed to be a practical workbook that our congregations can use as a guide to design and implement a principle-based structure for ministry consistent with parameters laid out in the *EC Discipline*. It is not a detailed template of a new ready-made organizational system for you to adopt. It is intended to be a “hands on” tool outlining an effective pathway towards a better way of deploying your congregation for ministry”.

This Section is to help EC churches implement Principle Number Seven in the *EC Discipline* Section 317. It is called the principle of “Pastoral Relationship”.

It states:

A healthy church willingly, trustingly, and respectfully submits to appropriate authority. Pastors, in turn, act as servant-leaders by employing authority for the good of the fellowship.

A church committed to a healthy relationship with its pastor(s) is a church that:

- ◆ *Models and demonstrates respect for those in authority, enabling the work of the pastor to be a joy and not a burden;*
- ◆ *Honors the pastor by offering him compensation that reflects his value to the fellowship and his labor on their behalf;*
- ◆ *Maintains a Pastoral Relations Committee committed to the best interests of their pastor(s) as well as the health of the congregation.*

“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever...”

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

Hebrews 13:7, 8, 17

National Conference Rule on Pastoral Relations Committee

115 PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

115.1 Purpose. According to the Discipline (par. 336) the purpose of the Pastoral Relations Committee shall be to aid the pastor, and any additional members of the pastoral staff, to effectively serve the needs and programs of the local congregation. It shall be a conferring and counseling committee and shall be available for consultation with the pastor concerning conditions with the local congregation that pertains to various pastoral duties.

115.2 Function. The Pastoral Relations Committee shall provide a confidential forum within which the pastor, and additional members of the pastoral staff, may seek and receive counsel, input, and insight regarding the work of the local church. In all meetings and activities of the committee, it is expected that biblical principles of conduct in relationships; in particular, those principals drawn from Matthew 18, shall be the norm.

The committee shall assist the pastor in developing a written description of responsibilities for the pastor. The description of pastoral responsibilities shall incorporate the pastor's vision as well as the mission of the church. The senior pastor in consultation with his pastoral team shall develop a written description of the responsibilities for each additional member of the pastoral staff, taking into account the mission and goals of the church as well as the input of the Pastoral Relations Committee. Each description of pastoral responsibilities shall be submitted to the Official Board/Ministry Council for approval.

The committee shall sensitively monitor the relationship between the pastor(s) and the local congregation and cultivate that relationship through consultation with the pastoral staff. The committee shall also communicate to the people the nature and function of the pastoral office.

The committee shall assist the pastor(s) in balancing and prioritizing family and personal needs with church needs. It shall remind him of the wisdom of using all annual vacation days, unless deferral arrangements have been made. In addition, assistance shall be given to appropriately use a week for ministry leave for the purpose of personal spiritual development, study, service, or a global ministry experience. The committee shall also expect the pastor(s) to avail themselves of one day off per week so that, through wise stewardship of time, "burnout" can be avoided, and the biblical requirement of "keeping the Sabbath" can be met. As a result of this wise stewardship of time, the pastor(s) will realize a greater protection of adequate family time, in addition to greater physical, emotional, and spiritual health. The committee shall also work to help the congregation understand these needs.

The committee and the pastor shall annually assess the health and progress of the overall ministry of the church in achieving its mission, vision, and goals. As part of that assessment, the committee and pastor shall together consider the pastor(s) role in light of the mission, vision and goals of the congregation, and his progress in fulfilling the responsibilities agreed upon the statement of pastoral responsibilities. The conclusions of this consultation shall be kept in written form in the records of the committee for future reference. The portion of this consultation concerned with the pastor's role shall have as its objectives both to encourage the pastor and to discern areas for potential means by which that growth may be achieved. In the

case of any additional member of the pastoral staff, the senior pastor shall conduct the annual consultation with each staff member, keeping in mind the objectives set forth above. The senior pastor shall then share the written conclusions of each consultation with the committee. The committee may then consult with each staff member individually, keeping a written record of the conclusions of such consultations.

Pastoral transition requests shall comply with the established procedures of National Conference. (See Section 900)

115.3 Membership. The Pastoral Relations Committee shall be constituted annually at a meeting of the Local Conference of each congregation following the annual congregational meeting and the reorganization of the Official Board/Ministry Council. It shall consist of not less than five (5) members, plus the pastor(s). The total number of lay members shall be an odd number. Membership shall include the pastor(s) assigned by the National Conference, the lay delegate, and the Official Board/Ministry Council president. The senior pastor, in consultation with the lay delegate and the Official Board/Ministry Council president, shall present additional names to the Local Conference for approval.

Only one member of an immediate family shall be permitted to serve on the committee. In cases where the inclusion of the lay delegate or president would result in a second person from the same family serving on the committee, the alternate lay delegate or vice president respectively shall replace that person. However, where the pastor, president of the Official Board/Ministry Council and the lay delegate are in unanimous agreement, the second member of an immediate family may serve.

Additional members may be added where necessary and appropriate, especially when the committee is involved in seeking a new pastor (see Section 900).

115.4 Organization. Following the appointment of the Pastoral Relations Committee, the senior pastor shall convene the same within thirty (30) days to elect a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary, and to schedule the committee's meetings for the year. No member of the pastoral staff shall serve as an officer of the Pastoral Relations Committee.

115.5 Meetings. The Pastoral Relations Committee shall hold at least four (4) meetings each year, one within each conference quarter. In case of a multiple-church charge, the committee of each church within the charge shall meet jointly at least once a year on matters relating to the charge. Special meetings may be called by the chairperson, senior pastor, the Stationing Elder, or the District Field Director.

115.6 Reporting. Members of the Pastoral Relations Committee shall keep all deliberations and decisions of the committee strictly confidential, except as it specifically directed by the committee. Report of pertinent matters of the committee meetings shall likewise be made to the Official Board/Ministry Council.

Taken from the Current National Conference Journal

Biblical Resolution Process

For a comprehensive description of the EC Church's statement on Conflict Resolution and Redemptive Church Discipline please see the 2016 *EC Discipline* Part 6.

Covenant –

In obedience to God's Holy Word and commitment to practicing Biblical Resolution, I promise to follow the Principle of Priorities. That is, my priorities are to glorify God, build harmony in the church, and avoid conflict. I will do as Matthew 18 admonishes – go to an offending brother "first alone".

First Step –

I will not first share the offense with another person. I am committed to restoring the relationship, rather than exposing possible sin. I recognize most problems with people are personality clashes, and I will try to understand their actions based upon their perspective.

Second Step –

If going to a person "first alone" does not resolve our differences, I promise to seek an objective and spiritual mature leader of the church who will listen to each of our perspectives on the problem. As a mediator in this dispute, this person will be able to advise one or both disputing parties concerning blind spots or areas of needed growth in order to resolve the issue and bring glory to God.

Warning –

I will not seek to find others who have also been offended, nor share my concerns with others prior to the meeting with my "offending brother". The purpose of involving an objective and mature leader of the church is not to validate my hurt but rather to open my heart and mind to the possible needs I may have regarding my relationship with others and serve as a mediator in the dispute.

I realize my friends may naturally listen to my concerns, but also take up my offense. I will, therefore, not cause them to become a party to a possible division and disharmony because of our friendship. Whenever I feel an urge to share the offense with my friends, I will pray and commune with God about my hurt.

Third Step –

When I am in a dispute with a fellow believer that cannot be resolved voluntarily, even with a mediator present, the one with who I am at odds and I will request that the church appoint an arbitrator(s) to listen to our disagreement. The arbitrator(s) will then render a binding decision to resolve the disagreement.

Fourth Step –

If a person who professes to be a believer refuses to be reconciled to a fellow believer in a conflict situation, refuses the advice of a mediator, or fails to submit to the binding decision of arbitrator(s), and if the party found guilty of an offense refuses to repent, seek forgiveness and be reconciled, then his or her church leaders will formally intervene with the disciplinary measures of trial and removal from the local fellowship as is deemed necessary for the restoration of justice and order in the local church.

(These steps are based on the principles found in Matthew 18:17-20 and Proverbs 6:16-19.)

RULES OF CONFERENCE “INITIATING A PASTORAL CHANGE”

Current National Conference Journal

903 INITIATING A PASTORAL CHANGE

903.1 The Pastor. A pastor may request a new assignment in writing to the Bishop.

903.2 The Pastoral Relations Committee [PRC]. The PRC may make the request for a pastoral change when there are valid reasons for such a request. A careful yet confidential assessment of the attitudes and concerns of the congregation and its other leaders should be considered. The counsel of the District Field Director should be sought. A request for a new pastor must be made in writing to the Bishop.

903.3 The Stationing Committee. The Stationing Committee may ask a pastor to consider a change when his gifts and graces are needed elsewhere. They may also initiate a change when the present assignment is not resulting in healthy ministry.

903.4 Early Withdrawal. Negotiations for an early, regular withdrawal shall be conducted with the stationing committee members from that region through the Bishop.

903.5 Irregular Withdrawal. When a pastor withdraws irregularly (that is, before the end of the assignment year) from our denomination, the Ministerial Development Community shall be authorized but is not required to request the return of his credentials. This request shall be made by the Ministerial Development Community Secretary unless the pastor has negotiated an early release with the Stationing Committee.

903.6 Exit Interview. The Ministerial Development Associate and/or the Bishop shall conduct an exit interview with pastors who withdraw from ministry

Process of Facilitating Pastoral Change

There are times when pastoral change is needed to facilitate health in the congregation. The following process presupposes a healthy congregation, which has a sense of itself, its values and a vision for the future and a clear mission. [Note: There is a document on Goals, Mission and Vision in the Appendix] While it is true that many churches are not at this point of health, the following process can help clarify the mission of a local congregation, while honoring those called by God to lead her as pastor.

Step 1 The Strategic Plan

It is healthy when a Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) can evaluate a request for a change of pastors against clearly stated and understood goals and plans. As PRC's (including the pastor himself) assess the direction of the church they might come to step two.

Step 2 Decision to Consider requesting a change

As part of a reasoned strategic process, a local PRC could conclude that a pastoral change should be considered. This ought not be a regular nor annual consideration. Once the decision to consider is made, the next step can be taken.

Step 3 PRC ask the Conference Minister to facilitate the assessment

Since the decision impacts three parties, the congregation, the pastor, and the Conference the District Field Director is invited to facilitate a discussion to discover whether or not "there are valid reasons for such a request". (Journal 903.2)

Step 4 District Field Director facilitates the assessment with the PRC including the pastor in the discussion.

Questions to ask in considering a pastoral change are explored in an attempt to come to agreement on this matter. (See "Questions to Ask..." document)

Step 5 A Request is made by the PRC for a pastoral change OR The pastor asks to be considered for a new assignment

To help in stationing, requests should be made in writing to the Bishop by January 1 in the year in which a new assignment is to be made.

Step 6 Stationing Committee considers and acts on the request

If the stationing committee concurs with the request, the stationing process is begun and a search for a new pastor is launched.

Resignations: As National Conference assigns the pastor; any pastoral resignation is to be offered to the Bishop for consideration rather than to any entity of the local congregation.

Questions to ask in assessing whether or not to request a pastoral change

1. Has this pastor's mission here been accomplished?
2. Would this pastor be better deployed in another church?
3. Does this pastor have a sense of restlessness with his current assignment?
4. Has a turning point been reached in the family life of the pastor (retirement, death of a spouse, graduation of a child, etc.)?
5. Which are the voices calling for a change?
6. If we requested a change now would we be "negotiating with terrorists"?
7. What time of the stationing year is it? (see deadlines in rule 904.1)
8. How well do the needs and expectations of the congregation at this point in the life of the church meet the gifts and graces of this pastor?

Process in Receiving a New Pastor

1. Announcement a move will be taking place.
2. A Stationing Elder is assigned.
3. Church completes Church Information Profile (the "CHIP").
4. National Conference Stationing Committee chooses a candidate for interview.
5. Local church may expand Pastoral Relations Committee for purpose of the interview process.
6. The Stationing Committee presents the Pastoral Information Profile (PIP) of a potential pastoral candidate to the local Pastoral Relations Committee for review.
7. Candidate interviews with the church Pastoral Relations Committee to confirm a "match".

8. An agreement is confirmed concerning expectations and compensation at a local conference convened by the Stationing Elder.
9. A transition task force prepares for saying good-bye and welcoming the new pastor.
10. National Conference makes the appointment of the new pastor.
11. A new pastor moves to the field. Moving expense reimbursed to local church by National Conference according to schedule.
12. New Pastor is installed.

Pastoral Appreciation Suggestions

October is pastoral appreciation month and an opportunity to encourage your pastor by honoring him by acts of love and appreciation. The Pastoral Relations Committee should take the lead in encouraging the congregation to appropriately celebrate the ministry of the pastor(s), wife, and family. The following suggestions are meant to stimulate your thinking. You may be able to prayerfully think of other creative ways of “appreciating” your pastor(s). Whatever you do, it will lift and refresh your pastor’s spirit!

Suggestions can include:

1. Thoughtful gifts that are bought or made.
2. Monetary gift in a card.
3. Scrapbook of memories.
4. A special day off with pre-paid activities such as:
 - a. Dinner arrangements
 - b. Bed and Breakfast for a night
 - c. Concert or show
 - d. Tickets for an attraction your pastor has expressed interest in
5. A congregational dinner to honor your pastor with testimonies.
6. Card shower

7. A combination of several of the above.

Whatever you may seek to do, it will bless you and your pastor(s).

