

# PASTORAL AND CONGREGATIONAL EVALUATION

## Introduction

This paper is based on the following assumptions:

- The relationship of the pastor and the church should be one of mutual commitment so that there is freedom to minister.
- The pastor has a responsibility to the church to share his philosophy of ministry.
- The church has a responsibility to provide a guideline for ministry for the pastor.
- The pastor's philosophy of ministry and the church's expectations for ministry should already be discussed as part of the hiring process.
- The pastor and church should agree on a system of accountability.
- Evaluations should help set direction for the ministry of the pastor and the church and help to strengthen that ministry.
- Evaluations should be closely related to written job descriptions.
- There should be an honourable way of terminating a ministry.

## 1. General Comments

### a) *The Purpose of an Evaluation*

- To discover the needs of a congregation, committee, or ministry and then change the focus according to the needs discovered.
- To see how the church is progressing toward its long-range goals.
- A congregational evaluation should be a separate exercise from a pastoral evaluation, but may be useful in the pastoral evaluation. A congregational evaluation may help to address issues that are quite unrelated to the pastor and, therefore, better addressed separately.
- A personal evaluation for individual congregational members may also be advisable from time to time. Personal spiritual inventory is important for any person who takes on the responsibility of evaluating someone else.

### b) *Forms for an Evaluation*

- Should be easy to understand (check sample Evaluation Forms).
- Should state the categories in the positive, give a rating (e.g. on a scale of 1-5), and provide a place for open-ended comments.
- Should include a category for suggestions as to how the church can grow in its worship of God and how to better meet the needs of people and any needed change in direction.

### c) *Signing Evaluation Forms*

- It is recommended that each person who fills out an evaluation form should sign his/her name to it. People who take the responsibility of evaluating others need to be accountable for what they say. These names should remain confidential within the evaluation committee. They should not be shared with the pastor unless in special circumstances, determined by the committee.

## 2. Congregational Evaluation

- a) Appoint/elect a representative committee of the church (e.g. chairpersons, spiritual leaders, people representing various age groups).

- b) The committee should organize, correlate and interpret the evaluation. The committee may either ask representative people within the church to complete the evaluation forms, or involve the whole congregation. The Conference Pastor is available to assist in this work.
- c) Where the congregation is asked to complete the evaluation forms, the representative committee should plan for an 'Evaluation Day/Evening' (e.g. an all-day Saturday celebration with a potluck lunch), where the evaluation is discussed and the ownership of the evaluation is accepted. Then suggestions are made for strengthening areas of ministries and checking for needed changes.
- d) The leadership body, together with the pastor and the congregation, needs to implement the steps suggested by the evaluation, so as to ensure continued spiritual growth.
- e) Congregational evaluations should take place at reasonable intervals. This allows for the implementation of suggestions from the evaluation and for constitutional change where necessary.
- f) Sometimes a church may decide to use an evaluation approach that has been developed by a church consultant, or by an organization that has specialized ministry in this area (e.g. the Natural Church Development process, headed by Christian Schwarz). Consult with the Conference Pastor.

### **3. Pastoral Evaluation - Procedure**

- a) A pastoral evaluation should be held periodically for the benefit of the congregation, the leadership, and the pastor. When the church is being led by a ministerial team, there should also be some evaluation of the team, either as a group, or each member of the team separately, or a combination of the two. Evaluation is not primarily an employment issue, where only salaried staff people get evaluated. The purpose of enhancing effective ministry should require lay ministerial leadership to be evaluated also.
- b) Appoint/elect a representative committee of the church (e.g. church board, pastoral search committee, chairpersons, spiritual leaders, people representing various age groups).
- c) The evaluation should focus on the development and strengthening of the ministry and not on term renewal. It is a good time to identify and affirm the giftedness and strengths that the pastor exhibits in the ministry. The goal is to bring encouragement, whether in voicing appreciation for work well done or in identifying areas that need attention.
- d) This committee may approach its responsibilities in several ways:
  - i) Select individuals of representative groups within the church.
    - The committee should organize, correlate and interpret the evaluation. The Conference Pastor is available to assist in this work.
    - The committee should discuss the results of the evaluation with the pastor (not necessarily share all the details) and give a general report to the congregation.
  - ii) The committee may do the evaluation.
    - The committee should share the collective perceptions (with concrete examples) and discuss them with the pastor.
    - The committee should report to the congregation.
- e) The leadership body, together with the pastor and the congregation, needs to implement the steps suggested by the evaluation so as to ensure continued spiritual ministry.
- f) Sometimes it may be helpful for the evaluation committee to prepare a series of questions for the pastor. This provides an opportunity for a pastoral self-evaluation, and provides an opportunity for the pastor to evaluate the church and its ministry. The committee could then meet with the pastor to hear the pastor's responses, affirming and celebrating what is good, and working with the pastor in responding to the issues that need attention.

### **4. Continuation and Affirmation of the Pastor**

It is recommended that congregations should not have set terms for the pastor's ministry. Terms require a congregational vote after the term expires, either to terminate the ministry or support its continuation. It is better to hire/assign a pastor for an open-ended period, with a view to long term and fruitful ministry. The pastor should be accountable to the congregation, formalized by periodic evaluations. Some evaluation should happen after the first year of service. This will help with responding to any initial problems that need correction or adjustment. It also allows for affirmations of strengths and giftedness for which the new pastor needs feedback. After the first year, it is recommended that there be a formal evaluation every three years, with informal feedback on a regular basis in the interval.

- a) Churches need to plan for a commitment from both the pastor and the congregation to a long-term pastoral ministry. There should be a clearly understood process for working through outstanding issues with a view to learning, growth and resolution.
- b) The representative committee and the pastor need to review the progress of implementation of suggestions as provided by the evaluation.
- c) Upon the basis of the discussion with the pastor, the committee should make a recommendation to the congregation regarding any changes or adjustments required. Sometimes needs may be identified that the pastor is not particularly gifted to work with. Within a leadership team, ministry can be organized and shared, seeking to utilize the specific callings and giftedness of each team member. At other times an unmet need may indicate the need for the church to call forth and develop additional leadership.
- d) The discussion and acceptance of the committee's recommendation would constitute the church's and the pastor's commitment to an ongoing ministry.
- e) Set aside a separate time (e.g. evening) for reporting the evaluation and have a method of affirming the pastor's ministry. Be creative about celebrating the work of your pastor and leadership team. Pastor appreciation events should not be reserved only for after the pastor resigns. It is appropriate to say "Thank you" at regular intervals.

## **5. Termination of Pastoral Leadership in a Local Church**

- a) Termination need not be a negative move. In light of the gifts of the pastor, a call of the pastor to a different ministry, or the changed needs in the church, the pastor and the congregation may mutually agree that termination would be in the best interests of all concerned.
- b) Termination may happen in the following ways:
  - i) The pastor, given the present situation (e.g. education plans, family issues, or other interests), after consultation with church leadership, may tender a resignation.
  - ii) The committee, in light of their understanding of the changed needs of the church, may recommend to the pastor that he resign.
  - iii) The pastor, the committee, or the church may ask for a vote of confidence in case of an impasse. A confidence vote should be a last resort, after all efforts at resolving outstanding issues through a process of fair, open and patient consultation have failed. The vote should require that a quorum of 80% of resident members be present at the meeting (or arrange for proxy votes to help meet the quorum requirement), and 70-80% vote in favour of the pastor continuing in ministry.