

Relationships for Support, Growth and Accountability for Leaders Working Document¹

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Jesus calls us to a life of abundance where our lives are shaped by Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Pastor and congregational leader relationships that plan for support, growth and accountability provide the foundation for leading the church in joining God's mission in the world so that God's abundant life flourishes for all people and all of creation. Intentional relationships that care for our well-being and stretch us in new ways are both needed for there to be joy and courage for growing fruitfulness and gospel risk taking.

In the local congregation:

The congregation's contexts are the primary settings for discerning and joining God's mission. When pastor(s) and congregational leaders engage in spiritual practices² and lifelong learning³ as a team and individually to guide their leadership, they create momentum for congregational health.

- The **Leadership Team** of pastor(s) and congregational leaders will develop and practice:
 - 1) **Spiritual practice(s)** that cultivate listening to God as a leadership team. How will the team create space for this in leadership and congregational work?
 - 2) **Life-long learning** that strengthens ability to lead the congregation in discerning and fulfilling the congregation's purpose (vision and goals, needs, opportunities).

Identify what learning is needed:

- a) As a team in order to lead well.
- b) To equip individual leaders for their role on the team.
- c) For the pastor(s).

¹ This working document is a revision of an earlier document in the 'Ministerial Credentialing Packet', a resource of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA. Your feedback from testing this plan as well as input from MC USA will inform the final version.

² Spiritual practices include the classic spiritual disciplines (meditation, prayer, fasting, study of Scripture, simplicity, solitude, submission, service) and other diverse practices such as movement/exercise where the activity provides an avenue for spiritual growth and renewal.

³ Lifelong learning includes a broad spectrum of learning through mentoring, coaching, peer consultation groups, continuing education seminars and courses, learning tours, online short courses, independent studies, as well as academic courses and programs, and intentional learning with one's own congregation.

- d) To integrate what is learned (including testing, practicing, adapting in context). How will assessment and evaluation happen? How will maturing/growth be celebrated?
- 3) Healthy relationships**
- a) Where there are shared expectations for healthy boundaries and accountability for pastors and congregational members.
 - b) Where there is a plan for working with conflict in the congregation that is respectful, holds all individuals accountable for their behaviour and works toward the goal of transformation.
 - c) Where the leadership team identify the person or group with whom the pastor will regularly review healthy boundaries, ethics and relationships; and then together proactively plan for development and practices that contribute to healthy pastor-congregation relationships. (See the ethics section of *A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership: Polity Manual for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA*⁴)
- **Pastoral leadership** (worksheet guide attached): The pastor will plan for thriving in ministry through:
 - 1) **Spiritual practices:** What spiritual practice(s) will help you submit yourself to the transforming love of God? What is your plan to ensure this is a regular part of your life? What relationships can support you and hold you accountable?
 - 2) **Life-long learning:** What personal and/or ministry development⁵ is needed to help you thrive in joining God's mission?
 - 3) **Relationships:**
 - a) What individual/group beyond the congregation can be a more frequent support for development and growth? A pastoral colleague, pastor/peer group, spiritual director, spiritual friend, professional coach, or mentor are the kind of relationships that can provide confidentiality and trust to reflect transparently on ministry, so that one is both encouraged and challenged to maturing leadership and ministry formation.
 - b) What diverse, yet mutual relationship(s) are you cultivating or will you cultivate in your context so that your faith is being stretched and transformed through engagement and reflection with 'the other'? (for example: Indigenous peoples; cross-cultural/inter-cultural relationships; the marginalized; ecumenical; inter-faith)
 - **Congregational leaders; lay pastors; bi-vocational pastors** (worksheet guide attached)
 - 1) **Spiritual practices:** What spiritual practice(s) will help you submit yourself to the transforming love of God? What is your plan to ensure this is a regular part of your life? Who can support and encourage you in this practice?

⁴ www.commonword.ca/go/124

⁵ The Ministerial Credentialing, Competency and Education documents provide a framework of 6 areas that all pastors should be developing for thriving ministry. See the Competency Grid – www.commonword.ca/go/284 and its Narrative Summary – www.commonword.ca/go/285.

- 2) **Life-long learning:** A significant part of your week is lived in the wider world that God loves. What equipping/learning can strengthen you for joining God's mission in your world?
- 3) **Relationships:** What relationships can provide you with support and accountability? What relationships can stretch you?

In the Area Church:

The Area Church provides oversight and accountability for pastoral credentialing; support for pastors and congregations including the health of the pastor-congregation relationship; as well as opportunities for ongoing leadership development and pastor-peer support.

- 1) Contact your Area Church Minister if your leadership team needs assistance in implementing this plan.
- 2) Pastors are asked to send in their annual growth plan to the Area Church Minister by January 1 (or a mutually agreed upon date) where it will be placed in the pastor's file for ongoing conversation, support and accountability regarding credentials.
- 3) The Area Church will regularly provide boundary training for pastors and congregational leaders.

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