



## Pastoral Evaluations: An Introduction

Pastoral leadership of a congregation is an important factor in the life of the church. Though not the only influence in a congregation, pastors are nonetheless a significant indicator of what is and will be happening in the congregation. Leadership matters! Appropriate and proactive pastoral evaluations are an important way to ensure a healthy relationship between the pastor and the congregation as well as the overall growth of the ministry of the pastor. The evaluation tools which are in this packet are all designed to be used for the growth and betterment of the pastor as well as the congregation as a whole.

The most basic reason why we do evaluations according to Sarah Drummond, in her book *Holy Clarity* is “to find and to create clarity in our religious organizations sense of purpose, and to see the truth when we investigate the impact of our activities.”<sup>1</sup> Or as another researcher for ministerial evaluations Elizabeth Lynn states, “evaluations call upon us to clarify, collect, and converse.” requiring us to look at what **we say we do** (job descriptions and congregational vision/mission statements), then honestly look at what **we actually do**, and then follow up with the **honest discussion** of which one needs to change, our documents or our actions.

As always the congregation exists in a specific cultural context and our culture is changing rapidly. Churches and other nonprofits are asking for greater levels of accountability of their leaders and carefully planned evaluations can help to provide this accountability. Particularly in these changing times pastors do well to know how their ministries are received and how they can be enhanced to meet the needs of the congregation and the mission or context they exist in. In this post-modern world where personal experience is embraced and infinite choices abound, the pastor needs to know not only if they are doing ministry tasks well but if indeed they are doing the right ministry tasks at all. Alan Roxburgh says, "make no mistake about it, every church leader must understand what has ended and be prepared for what is emerging if they are to lead God's people into and in this new century."<sup>2</sup> No longer can we plan as if what worked yesterday will work tomorrow let alone today.

Before an evaluation of a pastor can be done fairly the congregation must decide what it is they expect from their pastor and how this desired behavior fits into both the job description for this person and the vision the congregation has articulated for themselves. Thus a good evaluation is always looking at the pastor, the congregation and the vision they share.

A couple of words of caution. All evaluations, even pro-active and regularly scheduled ones, are a source of anxiety for the pastor and their families. It is important for the evaluation committee to name this with the pastor and with the congregation, and to be aware of this reality through the process. Likewise, it is imperative for the evaluation committee to proactively name the purpose of the evaluation as formative. The intended goal of an evaluation or review process is always to

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah B. Drummond *Holy Clarity* 2009 Alban Institute p xvi. [www.commonword.ca/go/1287](http://www.commonword.ca/go/1287).

<sup>2</sup> Jill M. Hudson *When Better Isn't Enough: Evaluation Tools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church* 2004 p 14. [www.commonword.ca/go/1288](http://www.commonword.ca/go/1288).

improve the ministry of a congregation and the effectiveness of its members and its pastors. If the pastor or the congregation is going through a difficult season for any reason, it is not a good time to do the evaluation and you should consider delaying the evaluation for an appropriate amount of time. Also connecting the evaluation to a vote on whether the pastor continues on with the congregation is not suggested, as it reinforces the perception that the evaluation is the mechanism to determine if the pastor should stay or go.

In preparation for the evaluation it is important for the committee to have a conversation with the area conference minister to talk through the planned process with them. As part of the planning the committee should have in hand the current congregational vision and mission statements, pastor's job description and growth goals, the memo of understanding for the pastor's employment with the congregation and other pertinent documents.

Knowing that not one size fits all, we offer several types of models for pastor/congregational evaluations all of which are intended to be positive and growth producing through the process. Look through them and see which one seems to best suit your situation and then feel free to adapt it to your specific needs. We have included several varieties of evaluations in an attempt to provide for the breadth of our settings. The first four are more formal evaluations and the other two are more informal assessment tools which we believe will be helpful in different ways for the growth of the pastor.

### **Below is a Summary of the evaluation tools in this packet**

#### **Formal reviews 3 - 5 years**

1. Solo Minister  
*Pastor/Congregation Review for solo pastor of a congregation.*
2. Team Ministry with lead pastor  
*Review for multi staff congregations with lead pastor supervising the other pastors*
3. Shared Team Ministry  
*Review for multi-staff congregations with personnel committee supervising pastors*
4. Pastor/Congregation Review - Appreciative Inquiry  
*This form of evaluation shifts from a problem-based to a strength-based approach while also identifying areas for growth in ministry. The focus is to identify "what is life giving" in a formative, future oriented way.*

#### **Early reviews and assessment tools**

1. Six Core Competencies  
*This tool can be helpful in assessing the pastor's ministry balance around the competencies identified in our denominations. These six areas can be processed together or on a rhythm which seems manageable for your local context.*
2. First year review of pastor in new congregational assignment  
*During the first year of a ministry it is imperative for the channels of feedback between the lay leaders of the congregation and the pastor be as open and honest as possible. This short feedback tool is to help facilitate such conversations for alignment, growth and enhanced years of ministry.*