

First Year Review in a new pastor-congregation relationship

The growing relationship between the new pastor and the congregation may affirm the initial impressions of the search and calling process. This growing relationship may also reveal aspects of the pastor and congregational life that were not so evident in the beginning of the ministry employment. Initiating a review within the first year can be an opportunity to assess and if necessary make some adjustments so that the pastor-congregation relationship is one that continues to be strengthened and thrives.

Review process:

- 1) The area conference ministers will initiate a conversation with leadership and recommend the process below for a ‘first year review.’
- 2) The pastor prepares a brief written report that uses the given job description and vision/mission of the church as reference points to detail the pastor’s ministry in the new congregation. Observations regarding perceived versus actual ministry; opportunities for ministry not included in the job description; joys and affirmations as well as tensions or gaps, may be included.
- 3) Two weeks prior to the ‘first year review’ conversation, the congregation’s vision statement, the pastor’s job description, the pastor’s report and the following guiding conversation questions are sent to the leadership group that will meet with the pastor:
 - What am I doing that you would like more of me to do?
 - What am I doing that you would like less of me to do?
 - What am I not doing that you would like me to start doing? [i]

The pastor comes to the meeting prepared to respond to the following three questions regarding the leadership team:

- What more would you like from us?
 - What less would you like from us?
 - What would you like us to continue doing?
- 4) The pastor and leaders are invited to review the documents and come to the ‘first year review’ conversation prepared to each give responses to the above questions and collectively discern what ‘early course’ adjustments may need to be made. The conversation begins with the pastor’s response to the three questions about the leadership team, followed by the leaders’ individual responses. The pastor’s transparency and candidness will set the tone for the transparency and candidness of the leaders. These responses then form the basis for further conversation, questions for clarification, insight into the complexities of ministry and the possible re-negotiating of priorities and expectations.

[i] ‘Getting Feedback on your ministry’, *Congregations*, 28, no 2, March/April 2002, p 24-26