

The Pastoral Relations Committee It's Role and Importance

Fundamental to a church's health is the relationship between the pastor or pastors and the members of the congregation.

We read in the Discipline of the Evangelical Congregational church that a church committed to a healthy relationship with its pastor or pastors is a church that "Maintains a Pastoral Relations Committee committed to the best interests of their pastor(s) as well as the health of the congregation" (Building a Leadership Team: A Governance Manual for Local Churches, p. 50).

Purpose:

"According to the Discipline (par.336) the purpose of the PRC 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" (Building a Leadership Team: A Governance Manual for Local Churches, p. 50).

Membership:

"It shall consist of not less than five (5) members, plus the pastor(s). Total number of lay members shall be an odd number. Membership by *Discipline* shall include assigned pastors, lay delegate, and Ministry Council president. Additional names for membership on the committee shall be submitted by the senior pastor in consultation with the lay delegate and Ministry Council president" (Building a Leadership Team: A Governance Manual for Local Churches, p. 51).

Meetings:

The PRC shall hold at least four (4) meetings each year, one within each quarter. Special meetings may be called by the chairperson, senior pastor, Stationing Elder, or the District Field Director. At these meetings all deliberations and decisions shall be kept in strict confidentiality, except as it is specifically directed by the committee. Appropriate reports are to be made to the Ministry Council" (Building a Leadership Team: A Governance Manual for Local Churches, p. 51).

Functions:

"The PRC 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."

"The committee shall assist the pastor in developing written description of responsibilities for the pastor—incorporating the pastor's vision as well as the mission

of the church. These descriptions of pastoral responsibilities are then submitted to the Ministry Council for approval.”

“The committee shall sensitively monitor the relationship between the pastor and the local congregation—helping the pastor to understand the needs and concerns of the church but also helping the congregation to understand the goals and ministry responsibilities of the church’s pastors.”

“The committee and pastor(s) have the responsibility to annually assess the health and progress of the overall ministry of the church in achieving its mission, vision, and goals, and the pastor(s) role in light of that mission and his/their progress in fulfilling his/their agreed upon responsibilities.”

(Building a Leadership Team: A Governance Manual for Local Churches, p. 50).

When You Have a Concern:

First, consider personally sharing your concern with the pastor to whom the concern is appropriately shared.

If instead of personally sharing your concern you decide to share your concern with a member of the PRC—the member who hears your concern will first ask if you have shared your concern with the pastor. If you have not you will be encouraged to do so. If you choose not to share your concern personally, it needs to be understood that the concern will be shared with either the pastor or the PRC only as long as you consent for your name to be attached to the concern. No anonymous concerns will be pursued. Knowing who has raised the concern enables either the pastor or PRC to respond.

Words of Exhortation from Holy Scripture:

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. . . .Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who must give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Hebrews 13:7, 17 English Standard Version).

“I therefore a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3, English Standard Version).

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