

PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Living Water Association
Ohio NorthEast, United Church of Christ
January 2023

RELATIONSHIP OF PASTOR AND CONGREGATION

- Is covenantal, it implies partnership
- Like all relationships, it needs to be developed and nurtured
- Is vital for effective and flourishing Ministry

WHAT IS PRC?

- FOSTERING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS – nurturing trust and encouraging open and honest dialogue, especially in presence of conflict
- RELATIONSHIPS – promoting healthy relationships between pastor and congregation
- SUPPORT and CARE to the pastor– interpreting roles and functions of the pastor with the congregation, dreams and aspirations
- LISTENING and FACILITATING CONVERSATION – members listen and respond with care to the pastor
- It is the pastor who needs to speak and share. Lay people can talk to one another but the pastor cannot discuss sensitive issues with many lay people.

WHAT IS PRC?

- Is **ADVISORY** – members share hopes, dreams and aspirations of congregation with pastor
- Is an **INDEPENDENT**, standing committee/team that does not report to the governing body or another entity, but is held accountable to the congregation
- Is about **ADVOCATING** for the pastor – such as fair salary, sabbatical, etc., as well as **ADVOCATING** for healthy relationship between pastor and congregation
- Is **CONFIDENTIAL** – offering **sacred and safe space** for the pastor and sometimes members to share constructively
- PRC does not publish minutes. Their reports are about process, not meeting content.

WHAT PRC IS NOT

- A “business” decision-making body – No business decisions are made by this committee. If such is needed, they can make recommendations to Governing body.
- A personnel/human resources meeting
- A performance evaluation team – annual performance review is the job of human resources
- A complaining session – bringing to pastor only complaints from congregation
- A “dumping” of issues on the pastor

HOW TO FORM PRC

- Do not ask for volunteers
- Recruit persons who have the gifts and wisdom to serve on such a committee – maturity, spiritual grounded-ness, able to keep confidences, integrity, etc...
- The pastor should have input as to who serves on PRC. People who have no respect for the pastor or have issues with pastor should NOT serve on PRC
- In smaller congregations 2-3 persons will suffice
- In larger congregation up to 5 persons will suffice

WHO SHOULD SERVE ON PRC

- Persons who do not serve as elected officers or on decision-making bodies of the church, such as Moderator or Council President, treasurer, member of personnel/human resources, etc. because of conflict of interest
- Persons who have emotional and spiritual maturity
- Persons with a background and commitment to relationship building, skills in listening, who can support and care without judgment or blame
- Persons who can keep confidences and respect boundaries
- Persons who respect the pastor and are themselves respected in the church and
- Persons who care for the health and wellbeing of the whole congregation and have no other personal or political agenda

POSSIBLE AGENDA

Use Reflective questions:

- What is working – celebrations, accomplishments
- What is not working – challenges, issues
- How can we do better – how can we partner to resolve and move forward
- How can we support you – how can committee support the pastor
- How can we help/support the congregation – clear communication, dialogue, safe space, etc...

A FEW ADDITIONAL NOTES

- It is not best practice for PRC to meet without the pastor
- If there are complaints to PRC about the pastor, those persons need to be encouraged to speak directly with the pastor
- Clarify the difference between **confidentiality** and **secrecy** – confidential is healthy and sacred, as it is about trust. Secret is unhealthy, and usually is based on shame and fear.
- As a committee, always appreciate what you have rather than focusing on what you don't. Trust that the Spirit will lead you.