

SAMPLE OVERVIEW MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION OF THE *MODEL CONSTITUTION FOR CONGREGATIONS*:

C13.04.A *Mutual Ministry Committee* (in the absence of a mutual ministry committee, the duties shall be fulfilled by the executive committee) shall be appointed jointly by the president [vice president] and the pastor. Term of office shall be two years, with three members to be appointed each successive year.

PURPOSE

- Strengthen the mutual ministry of all the baptized, including the members of the congregation and the staff.
- Affirm and strengthen the mission of the congregation and the ministry of the staff.

FOCUS

- To strengthen the mutual ministry of the congregation and the staff through listening and clarifying, sharing and communicating, reviewing and reflecting.
- To care for staff by conferring, supporting, and providing counsel to the staff in order to facilitate effective relationships among themselves and congregational members.
- To advise staff as they test their understandings of congregational and community needs and ministry opportunities, including interpretation of congregational and community history, values, etc.
- To interpret to the congregation the various duties and priorities of the staff.
- To reflect with the staff in their self-evaluation, continuing education interests, and ramifications of ministry reviews, goals and priorities.
- To advocate on behalf of the staff in matters of work priorities and work load, benefits, administrative help, etc.
- To commit to ongoing prayer support for one another.
- To enhance healthy communication between staff and congregation through mutual counsel, support, and feedback.
- To celebrate milestones, events, successes, etc., with the staff.
- To identify and to help address early warning signs of misunderstandings within the congregation and staff.
- To reflect on the mutual ministry of this unique combination of church staff and people, that the mission and ministry may be strengthened.

MEMBERSHIP

- Members serve staggered terms. The model constitution recommends 2-year terms, although 3 year terms are working very well in many congregations. (Note that a change from 2 to 3 year terms will likely require a change in the congregation's constitution.)
- Members are appointed jointly by the president and the pastor(s) (recommended method of appointment).
 - If a number of staff persons relate to the committee, they may rotate making recommendations on who will serve.
- Members are normally NOT currently serving in elected positions of authority (e.g. congregational president) because of the need for confidentiality in Mutual Ministry Committee discussions.
- Qualities and skills of a Mutual Ministry Committee member:

- Commitment to Christ
- Commitment to confidentiality
- Trustworthiness
- Ability to appreciate different perspectives and points of view (Members should be neither a best friend or vocal antagonist of the staff.)
- Commitment to the mission and ministry of the congregation
- Observant, aware of what's going on in the community and the congregation
- Willingness to share sometimes difficult information or concern in a caring, sensitive way
- It is important to have a diversity of voices, ages, longevity in congregation, gifts, etc.
- It is helpful to have persons with various experiences or skills, e.g.
 - A person used to caring for people, such as a nurse or social worker
 - A person with experience in management, personnel, or supervision
 - A person with a relative who has been a pastor or professional church staff person
 - A person connected to the “word of mouth” currents in the congregation
 - A person on the fringes of the congregation
 - A person who has served in a congregational leadership role
- A list of members of the committee is published in the congregation. There may be a temple talk or newsletter articles to explain the purpose of the committee. This should not be seen as a secret committee or a group of blind supporters of the pastor(s).

MEETINGS

- Meet monthly or bimonthly (quarterly at a minimum) for about 90 minutes. This committee is proactive in support of mutual ministry among pastor(s) and people rather than simply reactive to concerns or issues raised. It meets regardless of whether there is a critical issue or concern that needs addressing.
- Committee chooses, out of its membership, its own leader for the year.
- Committee keeps simple minutes/records of meetings, which would include date, members present, and general agenda items. Items of a confidential nature should not be included.
- Committee functions by consensus.

WHAT A MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE DOES NOT DO

- Annual ministry reviews (normally done by the personnel committee or executive committee)
- Set priorities and goals for the congregation and staff (normally done by the congregation council; details can be worked out with the help of the Mutual Ministry Committee)
- Set salaries (normally recommended by personnel committee or congregation council; sometimes there may be a need for Mutual Ministry Committee advocacy on behalf of a staff person)
- Set policy (may recommend changes to the congregation council, but Mutual Ministry Committee has no legislative authority).
- Conduct therapeutic or counseling sessions for the staff or members of the committee.
- Serve as the grievance collector for the congregation, hearing only complaints. (Mutual ministry committees do not address anonymous concerns – *everybody says, nobody likes, an unnamed source is concerned*, etc. Gossip can destroy a congregation.)
- Make personnel decisions.

COMMITTEE SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH:

- Letter of call or job description of professional staff
- Mission statement of the congregation
- Goals and priorities of the congregation
- Constitutional description of the office of pastor
- Agreed-upon goals and priorities for each professional staff person
- Reports of the annual mutual ministry review
- Annual continuing education covenant

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- Mutual Ministry Committees are not started in the midst of conflict.
- Mutual Ministry Committees are not created as a way to get a pastor to leave.
- In multiple point parishes, there may be one Mutual Ministry Committee for the entire parish, if the congregations share various ministries. If the congregations are yoked only by virtue of sharing a pastor, then it may be preferred that each congregation has its own committee. However, the Mutual Ministry Committees should meet jointly at least once a year to consider shared matters.
- Normally the pastor and any other called leaders are part of the committee. As appropriate in particular settings and circumstances, other professional staff members may also be part of the committee.
- Call Committee members can be excellent members of the Mutual Ministry Committee for the first few years of a new leader's service.

MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE SAMPLE AGENDA

Bible Study/Reflection (15 minutes)

- led by Maria (a pre-selected committee member) -- Romans 12:4-8

Community building exercise (15 minutes)

- This exercise is particularly important as the committee members begin to develop relationships of trust.
- This meeting's question: Where have you seen God's Spirit at work in this congregation that has touched your life recently?
- Next meeting's question: Share a meaningful experience in your faith development.

Sharing: How are things going? (30 minutes)

- e.g. Any updates from last meeting? What do you observe? What do you hear? What have you noticed recently about the community around the church? What has brought the church or the staff joy? Is there tension? Have you noticed any trends? High points since we last met? Low points?
- Each person shares, including staff and committee members.

Special focus for this meeting (20 minutes)

- Each meeting can have a particular focus, such as continuing education plans; discussion of the annual ministry review; dreams and gifts of the pastor(s) and staff in relationship to use of time; sabbatical reflections; and staff relationships.
- The meeting can also have as its focus a particular concern or celebration.

Next meeting (5 minutes)

- Time, location, Bible Study and prayer leader, special focus, etc.
- Review any assignments for committee members, staff, etc.
- The committee may also conduct a very brief review/evaluation of this meeting.

Closing prayer (5 minutes)

- led by James (a pre-selected committee member)

Each committee will form its own agenda, depending on staff configurations, history of the congregation, length of time the pastor(s) or other staff persons have been serving the congregation, how long the committee has been meeting, special events or needs, etc.

Mutual Ministry Committees may occasionally meet without staff present -- to test perceptions, reflect on issues, etc. They may also occasionally meet with staff persons individually. Mutual Ministry Committees may meet infrequently in a more social setting, such as dinner, to allow for celebration and to deepen relationships.

YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE OF ABC LUTHERAN CHURCH

For 5 years, Pastor Esperanza has been the solo pastor at ABC Lutheran Church, situated in a changing neighborhood. About 4 years ago, she wanted to look at using some of the underused space in the church for an after-school program for the elementary school students down the street. When she enthusiastically brought the idea to the congregation council, the conversation was shut down quickly by a few key voices. In a recent meeting with the new school principal, Pastor Esperanza was asked if the church would consider an after-school program for low-income families in the neighborhood. Pastor remembers what happened a few years ago and, although excited about the possibilities, she doesn't want a few voices immediately to squelch the idea. Pastor brings the concern to the mutual ministry committee for conversation and counsel on how or if to proceed. ***What are some of the questions that might be considered as the pastor and Mutual Ministry Committee discuss this situation?***

Lee, a lay staff person, was hired by the congregation 6 months ago with primary responsibility for outreach and evangelism. This area of ministry was identified as a congregational priority for the next 5 years. Lee has been having difficulty getting the congregation council representative with responsibility for outreach to follow-through with forming a task force or team to help with this ministry. The council president indirectly tells Lee to keep trying, but with no particular suggestions. Lee brings this concern to the Mutual Ministry Committee for conversation and counsel, wondering about what seems like a mixed message from the congregation: we want outreach in this congregation, but we are unwilling to participate in this ministry. ***What issues might be considered as Lee and the Mutual Ministry Committee discuss this situation?***

Pastor Newby has been at ABC Lutheran Church for about a year. This is her first call. For the past month, she has been receiving almost daily critical emails from Mr. Smith, a member of the congregation. Pastor has attempted to set an appointment with Mr. Smith for conversation, but Mr. Smith says he's too busy. The email complaints are about her sermons *not feeding the people* and her failure to get young families coming to the church. Mr. Smith's most frequent complaint is that Pastor Newby doesn't regularly visit the shut-ins. (The congregation council had decided that volunteers would visit shut-ins on a monthly basis and that pastor would visit quarterly so she could focus on other ministries.) Pastor shares her frustration about the emails with the Mutual Ministry Committee. Several members of the Mutual Ministry Committee know that Mr. Smith has been complaining to others about Pastor Newby and they recognize this pattern of behavior from other settings. ***What role might the Mutual Ministry Committee take in this situation?***

It has been a particularly busy few weeks for Pastor Friendly, associate pastor at ABC Lutheran Church. The regular summer schedule is in full swing -- Vacation Bible School, senior pastor's annual continuing education, and confirmation camp. In the course of three weeks, Pastor has conducted 8 funerals, including 3 resulting from an auto accident in the community which left 4 teenagers dead. Pastor hasn't had a day away from the church all month. As a member of the Mutual Ministry Committee, you notice that Pastor Friendly isn't his friendly self these days. ***How might the Mutual Ministry Committee be pro-active or supportive in this situation?***

Mutual Ministry Committee members have noticed a pattern of concerns raised about not being able to reach Pastor Vanish and his not returning phone calls. The church secretary rarely knows his schedule or how to contact him in case of an emergency. The secretary has asked for a tentative schedule from him, and he complies for a week or two, but then the old patterns resume. The recent event that brought this concern to a head was when the matriarch of the congregation was rushed to the hospital on Monday and the pastor was nowhere to be found until Wednesday afternoon. ***What role might the Mutual Ministry Committee take in this situation?***

NOTES

For continuing ed:

- refer to current guidelines
- handout sheet with draft guidelines, body and appendix
- hand out 2 page covenant info
- me to committee---recommended changes

For sabbatical:

- refer to current guidelines
- hand out sheet with draft guidelines, body and appendix
- hand out 2 page FAQ
- me to committee – recommended changes

For mutual ministry committees:

- refer to current guidelines
- hand out sheet with draft guidelines, body and appendix
- hand out overview, agenda, and scenarios.