

ORIENTATION FOR CONGREGATION
MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE
PART II

How many of you plant a garden? Now, my understanding of a garden is that you wake up one spring morning and its warm enough to plant your garden. So you go outside, seeds in hand, dig a few holes and put in some seeds, cover them up, and go back into the house to watch TV. And when the produce is on the plants, you go back out and pick ‘em, cook ‘em, and eat ‘em. Simple as that --- Right? WRONG! There is a lot more to growing a garden. The soil must be prepared during the off season. I know someone who puts all his fall leaves on the garden, then spreads newspapers over the leaves and waters it down real good. By the time spring is here the leaves and newspapers have rotted into a rich mulch, that is then turned over into the soil . Weeds are pulled, and the soil is even fertilized, if necessary. And then the planning of where to put what in the garden. Then the planting. Then the weeding, thinning, and watering. Later the harvest amidst continued weeding. My point --- it takes a lot to grow a garden. It needs constant tending.

It takes a lot to tend a congregation. It is a year round project, just like a garden. I want to share with you some more about productive tending of a congregation this morning. And one of the best way to do this is by having a Mutual Ministry Committee.

This morning I want to pose three questions and provide some answers to those questions. As I do this, keep in mind that we are tending a congregation.

1. WHY HAVE A MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE

- + To provide a safe place for the pastor to share his feelings, joys, and frustrations that may not be appropriate in other settings.
- + To provide a safe place for the congregation to go to express their concerns in constructive and helpful ways,.
- + The Mutual Ministry Committee is a small group that carries out the ministry task of:
 1. Scanning – Scanning is like driving a car. A safe driver is constantly scanning what’s ahead, what’s behind, what’s on the sides. Scanning by the Mutual Ministry Committee is being watchful of the mission of the congregation. Like in planting a garden, there may be some weeding. A mission/task may have been completed. It does not need to be continued forever because it was once set in motion.
 2. Response - Evaluation and response is vital to a healthy congregation. The response is always in support of the mission of the congregation.

2. PURPOSE OF A MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE

- + To minister mutually to the pastor as a way to assure good ministry within the congregation.
- + To provide an opportunity for early intervention and therefore early resolution of any differences and/or misunderstandings within the congregation.
- + To assist the congregation in identifying special gifts, talents, and skills of congregation members and the pastor.

3. FUNCTION OF THE MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE

- + To serve as a “listening post” for the pastor in times of personal or professional crisis or stress.
- + To provide for the annual review and reflection upon the mission and ministry of the congregation.
- + To help identify professional leadership needs in light of concerns and goals of the pastors, staff, congregation, and synod.
- + To develop open communication about expectations, attitudes and concerns within the congregation, the community, and staff.
- + To identify continuing education that would benefit both the mission of the congregation, and the ministry of the pastor and staff.
- + Share with the pastor the expectations of the congregation, within the confines of the Letter Of Call.
- + Annually review the details of compensation, housing, pension and other benefits provided for pastor and staff.
- + Serve as a personnel committee for support staff.
- + Serve as a group where the pastor can share and test new ideas.
- + Serve as a “call committee” and/or interview group for the selection of new personnel (other than the pastor).
- + Serve as an exit interview group, when a pastor or staff personnel leave.

This committee is a “people building” group charged with making sure that the ministry goals of the congregation are carried out mutually by the pastoral leadership and the members. The committee observes and listens to the pastor and other congregation members to make sure that no one is under-functioning, nor over-functioning, in accomplishing agreed upon goals for the congregation.

The pastor should be able to look to this committee as a place where he can try out new ideas regarding ministry goals and receive honest feedback.

In terms of accountability, committee members are accountable to the leader and to one another. Information shared in meetings is not to be talked about outside the group. Therefore, no committee minutes will be kept. A general report will be made annually to the Steering Committee. It has no authority to set policy or program. Any formal review of the pastor’s and congregation’s ministry and performance is the responsibility of the Steering Committee.

Prayer and Bible Study will be an important part of each meeting of the Mutual Ministry Committee.