

# Tending Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relationships

Doug Luginbill,  
Conference Minister  
Central District Conference



The goal of this seminar is to offer some tools and thoughts on ways to “*tend healthy relationships between pastors and congregations.*”



*To tend-* root word *tendere* which means “to stretch, to expect, to wait for.”

- Healthy relationships expect to be stretched. “Tendons” are strong rubber bands connecting our muscles to bones. They are meant to stretch...to a certain point.
- Healthy relationships benefit from clear expectations.
- Healthy relationships take time to develop and mature. This includes periods of “waiting” and patience.





What are basic expectations that pastors need from a congregation?

What are basic expectations that congregations need from a pastor?



# Pastors Need:

Job Description

Covenant of Understanding

<https://www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/ministerial-transitions-committee-packet/>

Process for feedback and testing alignment with job description.

<https://www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/pastor-congregation-evaluation/>

**Healthy Pastors Influence  
Healthy Congregations**

**Healthy Congregations  
Influence Healthy Pastors**





Who is responsible  
for tending healthy  
pastor-congregation  
relationships?



It's a human-divine task!





# Why a Pastor Congregation Relations Committee?

[https://mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/PCRC\\_JobDescription.pdf](https://mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/PCRC_JobDescription.pdf)



The PCRC/SRC task is to tend to the health of congregational relationships.

to care for the relationship between the pastor(s) and the congregation

and when necessary, to mediate conversations between pastors and members of the congregation, pastors and the church council/board and between pastors and other members of the pastoral team.



## Tending to the health of congregational relationships.

The PCRC has a relational and mediating role. Although the agenda may include contractual issues such as salary negotiation and pastoral reviews, the PCRC will serve in a consulting role and make recommendations to the church council or church board.



# Characteristics of an Effective PCRC

Meet regularly and often (4-6 times per year?)

Prepare for meetings

- Have an agenda
- Stay focused on agenda and identify topics for future meetings
- Allow adequate time

Establish partnership with pastors

- Keep pastors informed
- Take pastors into confidence
- Maintain “We are in this together” attitude
- Provide support and understanding



# Characteristics of an IN-effective PCRC

Conduct annual evaluations only

- Withhold regular feedback
- Allow issues to build too long
- Related to salary and appointment decisions more than to growth

Allow too little time and care

- Insufficient time to do task well
- Insufficient care in getting input and preparing for evaluation

Behave unfairly

- Bringing unevaluated complaints
- Bringing anonymous complaints
- Giving all sources equal credibility
- Not putting issues in perspective



# What PCRCs Most Need from Clergy

## Cooperation and receptivity

- Willing to listen with open mind
- Attempt to understand members' needs and concerns
- Attempt to make some changes
- Openness to improvement ideas

## Clear and open communication

- Pastor's vision for ministry
- Candid assessment of what is going on in the church
- Information about issues and needs



# What Clergy Most Need from PCRCs

## Honest feedback

- Balanced, objective, thoughtful, and candid feedback
- Treated as adults who can take criticism

## Personal concern and support

- Advocate for pastor

## Communication with the congregation

- Education of congregation
- Feedback from and to congregation

# Opportunities for Greater Learning

- Mennonite Central Committee: <https://mcc.org/resources/peaceful-practices-guide-healthy-communication-conflict>
- Credence & Company- <https://credenceandco.com/>
- Lombard Mennonite Peace Center- <https://lmpeacecenter.org/>