Partners in Ministry: Ethical Conduct for Congregations

Study Guide

Michigan District
Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod
2010

LETTER FROM PRESIDENT MAIER

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is a great day to be alive in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Indeed, it is a great day when we remember that we are living in the light of our Lord's Easter victory with all of its resplendent blessings. It is a great day when we are continually renewed and transformed by the Word of God and can pass its life-changing truths to others … in word and deed. It is a great day when we can recognize our own short-comings and failures and through the Holy Spirit's guidance run to the cross and rejoice in the forgiveness that is ours. It is a great day when we contemplate the gift of eternal life that is freely given and received by grace through faith in Jesus because of His suffering, death, and resurrection as perfect payment for all sin.

It is a great day to be a child of God!

It is a great day to remember that the congregations of our District have been greatly blessed through the services of many faithful workers, Ministers of Religion–Ordained and Commissioned. They daily and faithfully continue to work in the Lord's church in many and varied local contexts. Each day the Gospel message is proclaimed, sins are being forgiven, captives of sin are being released, and lives are being transformed and directed. The rejected are being welcomed, children are being taught, adults are growing in faith, those in despair are discovering hope, and all other realities in life are being faced because Jesus and His promises are with us and upholding us.

This document has been prepared to assist congregations in examining the way we deal with our workers and with sister congregations of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. It is designed to underscore good practice when securing workers, living with workers, and dealing with workers as they retire or move on to other areas of ministry. It will also help us to develop policies that will assure that all are provided for in a caring and professional way.

You are encouraged to compare the issues raised in this document to your current practices. If changes are needed, you can then update, or put in place, policies that help you deal with issues before they present a challenge for your congregation in relating to your workers and/or to sister congregations.

May our Lord continue to bless our congregations with faithful workers. It is our prayer that this document will assist our congregations as they support those that serve us.

Serving the Lord in a great day,

Rev. David P. E. Maier

Rev. David P. E. Maier, President
Michigan District of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

Study Guide for Partners in Ministry: Ethical Conduct for Congregations

Table of Contents

I. Theological Rationale 4

II. Seeking a Church Worker 5

A. The Position 5
B. Candidates 5
C. Receipt of Candidate Information 6
D. Interview Process 7
E. Honest and Forthright Communication 7
F. Timing and Proximity Considerations 8
G. Disclosing Candidate Information 9
H. Call or Offer Accepted 10
I. Prayer 10

III. Living Together: Part I - Care for Workers 11

A. Work Environment 11
B. Professional Growth 11
C. Resources 12
D. Compensation 13

IV. Living Together: Part II - Support for Workers 14

A. Spiritual Growth 14
B. Support for Healthy Family Life 14
C. Employing More than One Family Member on Staff 15
D. Dispute Resolution 16
E. Confidentiality 17
F. Community Life 17

V. When A Church Worker Leaves 18

VI. Relating to Congregations, District, and Synod 20

I. THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

A. Romans 12:5 states we are "members of one body". How does the way we relate to each other change if we consider each other as parts of "one body"?

B. Romans 12:6-8 mentions gifts we have received. How is each member encouraged to use his/her special gift for the benefit of the whole body? What would happen to the body if one of the gifts was not evident?

C. What is the ultimate goal of the body of Christ according to Matthew 28:19-20? Why then is it so important for the body to be healthy? What ramifications of an unhealthy body can be drawn from Matthew 28:19-20?

D. According to Acts 6:1-7 and Ephesians 4:11-12, what function does today's Pastor, Principal, Teacher, Director of Family Life, Director of Christian Education, Music Minister, Youth Minister, Deaconess, and other professional church workers play in the life of the congregation and the greater Kingdom of God?

E. In John 13:34 Christ gives us a new command, "Love one another." How can the congregation live out this command in its relations with the called church workers? What happens to the body when love is not practiced among members and church workers?

F. How can Philippians 4:14-19 be used as a guide for showing love to one another? As you examine the current relationships between the congregation and its professional church workers, can you see evidence of this love?

G. Hebrews 13:17 gives a reason to obey those in authority. How easy is it for relationships between church workers and congregation to deteriorate when the church worker exercises authority as "one who must give account"? How easy is it to attribute ulterior motives to the worker and not respect the God-given authority to call actions, practices, or deeds into account?

H. The congregation stands as one part of the body of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. How could the actions of one congregation regarding relationships with, treatment of, or practices towards professional church workers impact other congregations of the Circuit? District? Synod?

I. Romans 8:1-17 exhorts us to live a life "controlled by the Spirit." How can others see evidence of this life in our relationships with professional church workers?

II. SEEKING A CHURCH WORKER

Part A: The Position

1. Do you have detailed position descriptions for each of your professional church workers?

2. What benefit to the congregation would there be in a detailed position description? To the worker?

3. Are there any "unwritten" expectations that church workers are expected to fulfill? Are there any "unwritten" functions that church workers are not allowed to perform?

4. How often are the duties of church workers reviewed for relevancy? How many duties are maintained in position descriptions because, "that is the way it has always been done?"

What do you think?

The current principal is retiring after 35 years of service at the school. He was very active in the life of the congregation. He would often perform tasks outside of the Call of principal, such as, playing the organ on Sunday, visiting the hospitalized, and directing the Christmas program for the Sunday School.

He is very comfortable operating without a formal, written position description. He is fond of saying, "I do ministry, not duties."

The Call committee has asked him to write up what he does so that they can write a position description for the new candidate. He works long and hard to detail every function he performs, both for the school and for the church.

The Call committee copies his report and sends it to the Candidates.

1. Can you see problems ahead for the congregation?

2. When is it "fair" to expect the new principal to perform the same functions as the previous one and when is not "fair"?

3. Who should write position descriptions – the worker, the congregation, or both?

Part B: Candidates

1. Will congregations give preferential consideration to candidates submitted by members as opposed to District?

2. What problems can a congregation experience if it seeks candidates apart from District?

3. How do you ensure the concept of "fairness" in soliciting for and hiring candidates for open positions?

What do you think?

The congregation had a Pastoral vacancy for two months. The Call committee was just meeting to prepare a Candidate list to submit to the congregation. The chairman of the committee had called District to see when they would be sending names.

He was told that the congregation had violated procedures in their treatment of their last pastor. The district official wanted to meet with the congregation before sending names of Candidates.

The Call committee was furious. They weren't about to let District dictate who and when they could call. They had received a name from a member and decided to investigate the name.

The Candidate was a cousin of one of the members. He was ready to leave his current congregation due to its views of women's roles in the church. He mentioned to his cousin, "If they Call me, I will come."

The Call committee saw its problems solved and recommended him as their candidate.

1. What potential problems might be in store for the congregation?

2. What potential problems could sister congregations expect from the decision to call this candidate?

3. How does working with District help the congregation avoid future conflict?

Part C: Receipt of Candidate Information

1. Who in the congregation is authorized to receive, read and store candidate information?

2. What safeguards are in place to prevent the unauthorized release of information?

3. What types of information is considered public and what types of information are only for those who have a "need to know"?

4. What potential harm can be done to a candidate by the release of information? What potential harm can be done to the congregation?

What do you think?

The Call committee has received all of the information concerning the candidates for the pastoral vacancy. As they read through the documents, they came upon one candidate that had a gap in their work history. Three years was missing from the history.

The Call committee speculated on why the three years were unaccounted for in the documents. Some suggested he was in the military and was serving overseas. One suggested he just forgot to include the information, since he was single, he didn't have a wife to correct him when he was wrong. One suggested he was in a foreign mission field. Every suggestion was duly recorded in the minutes.

The Call committee decided that they would forgo further consideration of any candidate who could not fill in his work history.

The Minutes of the meeting were duplicated for the members and left in the church mailboxes for them to pick up. The secretary was in a hurry to leave town and had asked his 12 year-old daughter to put the papers in the mailboxes for him as he ran some errands. The girl diligently placed every paper into the correct mailbox. She then left the extras on the table and hurried to join her father.

The Call committee chairman was surprised to receive a phone call from a neighboring pastor wanting to know why the Call committee had disregarded his member's nephew from consideration. He further wanted to know why the Call committee said that the candidate was in a military jail overseas for wife abuse.

1. What would have been a better procedure for finding out why there was a gap in work history?

2. What danger is there in having public access to private documents?

3. How public are Minutes from meetings? Are there safeguards to privacy in the information included in the Minutes?

Part D: Interview Process

1. How seriously will you consider a Candidate that declines an invitation for an interview? Do you subscribe to the concept that interviews are discretionary?

2. Who conducts the interview? Are all areas of congregation life and activities represented on the committee?

3. What value is there in distributing interview questions before the interview? What value is there in not letting the candidate know the questions?

4. What danger is there in interviewing one Candidate by phone, yet, other Candidates are interviewed in person?

What do you think?

Pastor Gee and Pastor Eye were being considered by the congregation. They were still tied after three votes. Many impassioned speeches were made about the merits of each man for the position. Each man possessed the gifts and skills necessary to lead the congregation. Each set of followers were adamant in their support of their Candidate. The meeting threatened to go long and create hard feelings for the future.

Mr. Smith rose from his seat, cleared his throat and asked for the floor. He spoke, "I am not used to giving speeches, as you know. I have sat here and listened to each side's merits of their Candidate. It sounds a little like politics, but I understand you mean well.

"Well, I am a businessman, as you know. I don't buy a product without first seeing it, I don't commit to a deal without knowing all the facts and I don't hire an employee without a trial period. Now I know that you can't do that for Pastor. But I was thinking, 'What kind of a man are we getting hitched to?' So I thought, why don't we just send some people over to their churches and hear what they have to say. Now if he can give a good sermon there, he should give one to us, too. I would be happy to visit whichever one of the two you say."

1. Can you see a danger in Mr. Smith's suggestion?

2. What would be a better way to solve the dilemma of having two equally qualified candidates?

3. How can your current interview process be improved?

Part E: Honest and Forthright Communication

1. Why would it be important for a Candidate to know about requirements for additional training, impending staff departures, or why the position is vacant? Why would the congregation wish such information to be secret?

2. Every congregation has problems; we are sin-filled people. What types of congregational problems need to be shared with a Candidate? Should being behind 5% in the budget be shared? Should being behind 50% be shared?

3. Why is it important for the future of the congregation's ministry that open and honest information be shared?

4. What would be an appropriate timetable to share with the Candidate when issuing a Call? Is it reasonable and proper to ask a Candidate to return an answer within a given time frame?

What do you think?

Theodore received the Call to serve as Principal of OLOPS Lutheran School. When he asked why the previous Principal had resigned, he was told that there were personality issues between the Principal and the Pastor. No further explanations were given. Theodore was never told that the Pastor was also leaving the congregation just as soon as a new Principal was installed.

The Call committee had decided that they would avoid future Pastor/Principal problems by sending both people to a week-long seminar on "How to Work and Play Well Together" being held in a city 100 miles away. Both people would be expected to bring proof of successful completion of the course to the congregation before paychecks are issued.

1. How open should the Call committee be about tensions between Pastor and the former Principal? Would such issues be irrelevant depending on the personality of the Candidate?

2. How could the fact that the Pastor is leaving affect the Candidate's decision?

3. Should training, such as relationship building skills, be tied into the issuance of a paycheck?

4. How could requiring the Pastor/Principal team attend training be helpful to the congregation? How could it be detrimental?

Part F: Timing and Proximity Considerations

1. When would it be acceptable to issue a Call to a church worker from the same circuit? Neighboring circuit? Same region? Same district? Neighboring district? Is geography always a determining factor when issuing a Call?

2. Is it ever acceptable to issue a Call to a teacher whose school has a Principal vacancy? Is it ever acceptable to issue a Call to a Principal whose congregation has a Pastoral vacancy? What if the candidates are highly qualified and desirous of a change, should they automatically be disregarded because of a vacancy in their current position? How would issuing a Call to a candidate from a church or school with a Vacancy be harmful to the body of Christ?

3. Who is to tell a Candidate he/she is no longer being considered? What form of communication should be used? Would a phone message saying, "Thanks for playing, you lose" be appropriate?

What do you think?

Trinity Lutheran Church sits on the eastern edge of Circuit 65. Emmanuel Lutheran Church sits on the western edge of Circuit 66. They are separated by 10 miles, a county line, and a circuit.

Pastor Roman from Trinity accepted a Call to be pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in another state. He will be missed.

Pastor Stable is a very talented, energetic outreach pastor. He has served Emmanuel for over 15 years. He would be interested in new challenges and opportunities to use his gifts. Trinity is expecting to start a building soon and could use a steady pastor. Pastor Stable would love the challenge of a building program.

1. Would it be ethical for Trinity to issue a Call to Pastor Stable? How does the fact that the two churches are separated by a circuit and county line affect the decision to call or not call? What could be the ramifications of issuing a Call to Pastor Stable?

2. Are the geographical boundaries of today's circuit structure accurately reflecting the driving patterns of today's society? How far will members drive to worship? Should that number be taken into consideration when issuing a Call?

Part G: Disclosing Candidate Information

1. Congregations are very anxious when calling a pastor to lead them. Some might argue that the more information about candidates, the better the Call will be. Why wouldn't it be acceptable to publish the candidate's biographical information in the church newsletter to obtain the most feedback and have the most informed Call meeting possible?

2. What harm can come from sharing candidate's information with friends' churches who are also calling but do not have the particular candidate's name?

3. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is a very small group of people. In an average-sized congregation with a Call list of 10 candidates, chances are someone in the congregation knows someone who knows someone who knows about the candidate. What can be the danger of information obtained from someone who knows someone who worshipped at the Pastor candidate's congregation?

4. It would seem expeditious to keep all candidates information that has not been issued a Call. One could save lots of time and energy if one Candidate would decline the Call by having the information ready to distribute. What is the danger of this practice?

What do you think?

The Call committee distributed the informational papers to the members gathered to issue a Call for Youth Director for St. John Lutheran Church. The committee had narrowed the list to their top five choices and was bringing no recommendations; they wanted the Holy Spirit to act on the hearts of the members.

After three votes, Alice Young received the Call. She had all of the qualifications they needed in a Youth Director. The papers were being collected when Mrs. Smythe, an influential member and grandparent of three youth group members refused to hand back the information sheets.

She commented, "This is public knowledge and I want to take these papers home and study them. You all just ramrod decisions through without giving us time to carefully consider all of the information. I am going to take these papers home and do my own research. If this Ms. Young doesn't work out, I will know who to Call."

1. Is the information about candidates distributed at Call meetings "Public Knowledge"?

2. How can Mrs. Smythe's concerns be answered while preserving the confidentiality of candidate's information?

Part H: Call or Offer Accepted

1. What responsibilities should the congregation assume to assist the worker in all phases of relocation? What would be considered reasonable? What would be considered frivolous?

2. What help in finding a house would be considered appropriate for the congregation to provide?

3. For how long should meals be provided for the new worker?

4. How much advice should the congregation provide the new worker regarding such incidentals as banks, cable companies, internet providers, grocery stores, phone providers, insurance companies, and the like? How could such recommendations ever be considered a conflict of interest?

What do you think?

Rich has just accepted the Call to be principal of the school. He lived two states away. His wife passed away between the time of his accepting the Call and his moving.

The Calling congregation sent a crew of volunteers to his house to help him pack. A member of the Calling congregation provided a moving truck to come and load the household belongings. He was told to arrive at the new school whenever it was convenient.

When he arrived at the new congregation, he was told to go to the house that he rented before his wife died. When he entered, he found all of his furniture arranged exactly like it was in his old home. The rooms were ready to live in; beds made, kitchen organized, TV set up and books in the bookshelf. Boxes of personal items were sorted and stored in the garage, ready for him to organize.

Congregation members set up a schedule to provide meals for a month so he wouldn't have to concern himself with cooking for one person.

1. Did the congregation assist the worker in all phases of his relocation?

2. Could the members have done less and still shown their assistance?

3. Should all congregations do as much for every new worker?

Part I: Prayer

1. Does the congregation consider prayer before every decision to Call?

2. Does the congregation pray corporately and publicly for workers they have Called and for current workers who have a Call?

3. Do congregation members use private time for prayer for Called workers?

III. LIVING TOGETHER: PART I - CARE FOR WORKERS

Part A: Work Environment

1. Other than salary and benefits, how does the congregation demonstrate fair and equal treatment for all staff members?

2. What activities, programs, and opportunities does the congregation undertake to bolster staff morale? How can staff morale be assessed? How important is staff morale to the life of the congregation?

3. What danger exists if office equipment is not safe, clean, or operational? What harm can be done to the ministry if the office environment is not attractive or inviting?

4. How many substitutes are available for Pastor, Music Director, Teachers, or other professional church workers?

What do you think?

The third grade teacher received a brand new computer for her classroom – in 1998. Eight years later she is still using the same computer. She has requested a new computer, but has been constantly refused. She is making do with the programs she had in 1998 and has made them work for her students.

Recently the students have been complaining about the computer's processing speed. A mother has offered to purchase a new computer system for the classroom.

1. What message is sent to the third grade teacher when her request for a new computer system is denied?

2. Some in the congregation have said, "A computer is a computer, what harm is there in having the students practice on an old system?" What harm can you see in having the children use an old system?

3. What would be the advantages of accepting the offer of a donation of a new computer system to the Third Grade? What would be the disadvantages of accepting the offer?

Part B: Professional Growth

1. Who evaluates the Pastor's performance? Who evaluates the Principal's performance? Who evaluates other professional church worker's performance? Why is evaluation of performance necessary for the worker's professional growth? How are evaluations used for personal growth? Is evaluating church worker's performance a judgment about the worker's faith?

2. How often are job descriptions, calls, or contracts reviewed and updated? Why is review and revision important?

3. Why is on-going training necessary for professional growth? How can the congregation encourage its professional church workers to take advantage of training opportunities?

4. Is it considered vacation or work when professional church workers attend a conference?

What do you think?

Dudley has taught seventh grade for 30 years. He has a Master's degree in his area of teaching. His children consistently perform well on any standardized measurement of progress.

He refuses to attend any of the in-service workshops or District sponsored teacher's conferences. He argues that he can learn more by researching his subject area on-line than he can at any workshop or conference. He also argues that the amount of money the congregation has to pay for him to attend, especially if it is an overnight conference, is not justified when measured by what he would learn.

1. Is Dudley's argument for not attending conferences or workshops a valid one considering his student's performance?

2. Is it possible to learn and grow using the Internet? What shortcomings does this model present for teachers or other church professionals?

3. How can the congregation encourage and support Dudley in attending in-service workshops and conferences?

Part C: Resources

1. When would it be appropriate for a teacher to purchase materials for her classroom from her own finances?

2. Who should determine what resources are needed for the ministry plan?

3. If the congregation faces a negative cash flow, many options are available to relieve budgetary concerns. What priority should be placed on keeping the contingency line item funded and available?

4. How much liability coverage does the church carry on its professional church workers? Is the amount adequate in light of today's high court awards?

5. When was the last time the congregation provided legal counseling for its church workers, i.e. sexual harassment training?

What do you think?

*Pastor recently returned f*rom vacation. He attended church services at a church that used technology for worship and Bible study. He saw LCD projection units, surround sound stereo speakers, SMART Boards, Elmo Document cameras and Visual presenters and integrated computer/video/internet technology used to enhance the learning experience. He was impressed.

He called a meeting of his Board of Property to share with them his experience using technology. His board was enthusiastic and excited about using these resources in the parish; however, there was no budget money available. Someone suggested that they have a special fundraiser to finance the project.

1. What is lost to the life of the congregation if ministry resources are not budgeted?

2. What is the danger of funding resources using special fundraisers?

3. What would be considered an adequate percentage of the congregation's budget to be used for resources?

Part D: Compensation

1. What commitment does your congregation have to follow District's compensation guidelines for all professional church workers? What circumstances would dictate that a congregation exceeds District guidelines or not meet District guidelines?

2. Would it be proper for a congregation to compensate a principal for filling the pulpit for a vacationing pastor?

3. What is lost to the congregation and to the Kingdom of God when a congregation fails to fund professional church workers counseling needs?

4. Does the pastor take enough time for himself? Does the congregation insist he always be at church on Sundays? Are sabbaticals built into the church worker's benefits package?

5. Should the pastor always be the highest paid professional church worker in the congregation? When would it be possible that the pastor would not be the highest paid professional church worker?

6. In what situations does the congregation compensate a worker who leaves?

What do you think?

Pastor Fabio is 58 years old. He has just received a Call to be Director of Missions for North America. He is very excited about the opportunity. He feels that God has prepared him for the position, that he has the gifts to be successful in the position and that he has the vision needed for the new position.

He struggles with the Call for he is very successful and needed by his current congregation. He has just finished a Strategic Plan and the congregation is excited about the direction the ministry will take in the next five years. He is loved by his members and in turn, he loves them. He wrestles with the Lord over his decision.

He is in the middle of debating the Call when he thinks about his retirement years. He dreams about what he would do for the church as a volunteer. He then compares the salary he is currently receiving with the one offered. There is a $15,000 difference between the two salaries. He chooses the position with the higher salary.

1. What bearing does retirement play on Pastor Fabio's decision to choose the Call with the greater salary?

2. Should congregations compensate experienced workers and help them plan for retirement?

3. How does the Kingdom suffer when congregations do not take into consideration experienced workers needs to plan for retirement?

IV. LIVING TOGETHER: PART II - SUPPORT FOR WORKERS

Part A: Spiritual Growth

1. What practical ways can congregation members encourage church workers to take time each day for prayer and devotions?

2. How important is it that congregation members pray daily for church workers? How important is it that this information be shared?

3. How does your congregation help Pastor's family be active in corporate worship and Bible study?

4. How does your congregation encourage and help all other church workers be active in corporate worship and Bible study?

What do you think?

Pastor Wes recently graduated from the Seminary and moved his wife and baby to your congregation. He is excited about his first Call, but apprehensive about his personal growth in his relationship to God and his knowledge of His Word. He has very limited funds and his budget is stretched to the limit. He would love to purchase devotional, leadership, Concordance, and other reference books, but lacks financial resources.

He gets as much as he can from the Internet, but not everything he wants is on-line. He would love to have some hard copies of books so he can read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them. He is embarrassed to approach anyone in the congregation about this dilemma, lest they think he is being frivolous and not a good steward of his money.

1. What can the congregation do to find out about Pastor Wes's dilemma?

2. How important is it that the church maintains a professional library of devotional, leadership, Concordance, and other reference books for the use of Pastor and the members? Does your congregation maintain such a library? What input does Pastor have in purchasing titles for the library? How often are books added to the library? What is the annual budget?

3. What does your congregation do to help all church professionals build professional libraries?

Part B: Support for a Healthy Family Life

1. Does your vacation package provide adequate opportunities for professional staff members to relax, regroup, and recharge?

2. How does your congregation respond to the worker who brags, "I haven't taken a vacation in ten years!" or to the Pastor who refuses to take his day away from his duties?

3. How does your congregation avoid balancing the budget on the backs of the workers? Is there a scale in place that provides for adequate and equal compensation based on objective, measurable standards?

4. The worker's spouse or family often resents the expectations placed on the worker by the congregation. What plan does your congregation have in place to help the worker develop a healthy marriage and family?

5. Often a worker appreciates a "Thank You" note more than a paycheck. How does your congregation express "Thanks," appreciation and concern to and for the church workers?

What do you think?

Pastor Gutgenug avoids family vacations due to the expense. He is not able to afford to fly himself, his wife and their six children and he cannot afford the time or the expense of driving them anywhere. He compromises with his family by letting the kids camp outside and by having day dates with his wife.

He has thrown himself into the ministry and is very content to be involved helping his members. He has remarked, "No one member of the congregation expects a perfect pastor, but considered together, they do." When asked to explain he replies, "Member A may not care if I am faithful in hospital visits, but member B does. Member C may not care if I have the best sermons, but member D does, etc." So he has dedicated his life to serving the needs of his congregation. His wife and family encourage him to take a day off, but when he does, he is often interrupted by members calling for his help or advice.

1. What dangers are ahead for Pastor Gutgenug in his personal, family and ministry life?

2. What safeguards can the congregation put in place to honor his time away from the congregation?

3. Is there a way for the congregation to help Pastor and his family experience a "real" vacation? If so, what would be the impact for the family and the congregation?

Part C: Employing More Than One Family Member on Staff

1. How would clear job descriptions and lines of accountability help alleviate problems when hiring more than one family member?

2. When is it appropriate to hire more than one family member? What benefits would there be? What potential problems would there be?

3. Who should supervise, evaluate, or review a worker's spouse's job performance?

What do you think?

Principal Marvin accepted a Call to another school and is leaving in two weeks. The Board of Education Chairman received a list of possible replacements from the District office and has made initial inquiries.

One candidate caught his eye. He was well-qualified, has a great reputation, and is looking to move to the area. He has been at his current school for 10 years and wants a challenge. He is the ideal candidate. The Chairman feels good about the fit and is very impressed with the candidate.

The Call committee was all smiles as they talked to the Candidate over the phone. He was just perfect. He had the gifts and talents they needed and he was excited about the position. He would receive a substantial raise and the area was perfect for him and his family.

He ended the conversation by stating, "You do realize that my wife is a teacher and we would need a position for her, also, or we can't consider the position."

The Committee's countenance fell, there were no teaching jobs available not only in the congregation but in the community unless they let a teacher go. One of the Committee remarked that this was the perfect time to fire their marginal teacher.

1. Would it be ethical for the Call committee to fire a marginal teacher in order to receive an outstanding Principal?

2. Is it ethical for the Candidate to place the Call committee in the position to choose?

3. What dangers would there be in having a Principal supervise his teacher spouse? What benefits would there be to the congregation? The family?

Part D: Dispute Resolution

1. How can members encourage each other to follow Matthew 18 when listening to complaints regarding church workers?

2. Why is it a danger for board members to listen to complaints about church workers in settings other than an official meeting with the worker present?

3. When would it be appropriate to involve the Circuit Counselor, Congregational Ministry Facilitator, Superintendent of Education, or District President?

4. What danger is there to the Body of Christ when congregation members undertake secret meetings, write petitions, or Boards give credence to anonymous letters of complaints?

What do you think?

Marsha finished her first year as teacher at OLOPS Lutheran School. She was given very little direction about procedures when she accepted the Call. The Pastor waited four days to return her phone messages and the Principal never gave her a beginning date. It seemed as if everyone was excited to have her come, but ignored her once she accepted the Call.

As a result of her personal life, she had trouble with classroom management. Parents began to complain to the Principal after the first semester. She had no friends to help support her. The Principal seemed pre-occupied with his problems and the Pastor wouldn't take her calls. Soon the Board of Education Chairman asked for a meeting. At the meeting he explained that he was tired of hearing complaints about her classroom discipline and she needed to get her act together or look for a new position.

Soon after her meeting with the Board Chairman, she was called to the office to meet with the Principal and the Superintendent of Education for the District. He explained that he had received complaints about her and was investigating.

Marsha found a job at United Parcel Service the following week and resigned her position effective immediately.

1. How did Marsha's fellow staff members let her down?

2. Who is tasked with the responsibility to uplift and support teachers? What could her supervisors have done differently to help Marsha?

3. Was it appropriate for the District to have received complaints?

4. What happened to the Body of Christ when Marsha resigned?

Part E: Confidentiality

1. Who has a legal right to view a teacher's personnel file? Who keeps the Pastor's personnel file current? Are the files kept locked in order to prevent unauthorized persons from gaining access?

2. Pastors and teachers are often asked to render opinions about family disputes, custodial battles and child rearing questions. Often these professional church workers are asked by other congregation members to divulge confidential information with the pretense of wanting to help. Is it ever ethical for a church worker to divulge confidential information and if so, when and to whom?

3. How can a prayer chain be used to gain access to confidential information?

4. What procedures are in place to prevent confidential information shared by a church worker at an appropriate board meeting from being distributed to the congregation?

What do you think?

Arlene asked her principal for time off to visit her brother who was having heart surgery. The Principal told her to take all the time she needed even though she had used up her personal days. He promised that he would take care of all of the arrangements. Arlene also asked that he keep the reason confidential. Her mother was living in a nursing home near the church and many members would visit her. If mom heard about the heart surgery, she would have a panic attack and there would be a risk of her developing serious health issues. The Principal said he understood and would keep the information confidential.

When the Principal asked the treasurer for reimbursement for Arlene's substitute teacher, he was asked why she had missed school. The Principal informed the treasurer that it was for personal reasons. The Treasurer refused to issue a check citing the personnel manual which allowed only three personal days, all of which Arlene had used. The Principal went to his Board of Education Chairman and asked for a variance in the substitute policy for Arlene. The Board Chairman asked for a reason. When the Principal responded it was for personal reasons, the Chairman refused the request.

The Principal paid the substitute with his own funds.

1. Should the Principal have revealed the real reason for Arlene's absence? What danger would there be if he did?

2. Just because a worker asks that information be kept confidential, should it? Who should determine confidentiality?

Part F: Community Life

1. What advantage is there to the congregation when a church worker is involved in community organizations, functions, or responsibilities?

2. What disadvantage is there to the congregation when a church worker is involved in community organizations, functions, or responsibilities?

3. What could cause a possible conflict for the Pastor by being involved in community organizations? The Principal? Other church workers?

4. Who is responsible for addressing negative comments about a church worker's community involvement?

What do you think?

The village of West Frankfurter was making plans for the Sesquicentennial Celebration. Pastor Simon was asked to represent the Lutheran Church on the committee. He was honored to accept and the Elders gladly moved their meetings to a different night to allow him to attend the meetings.

At each meeting more and more plans were made for the huge celebration. Pastor Simon contributed many exciting ideas for the celebration. The committee respected his views so much that they made him chairman of the committee.

The congregation was excited to have their Pastor so publicly honored and respected. The closer the date for the celebration, the more news releases were generated. Each news story mentioned that Pastor Simon was Pastor of the local Lutheran church. Many scrapbooks were kept to be given to Pastor after the celebration.

At the final meeting of the committee, a letter of acceptance was read from the Governor's office. The Governor would be able to attend the village's celebration, but on the condition it would be moved to Sunday morning instead of Saturday night. The Committee was ecstatic. They couldn't wait to showcase their village and their leader, Pastor Simon. Pastor was concerned, that Sunday was Confirmation Sunday.

1. What would you advise Pastor to do? Is there ever a time when community involvement takes precedence over congregational responsibilities?

2. Did serving on the village's planning committee compromise God's Word? The work of the church? If yes, how?

3. Is there a way that Pastor could attend the celebration?

V. WHEN A CHURCH WORKER LEAVES

1. Why is it important to publicly announce the departure of a church worker? What would be the appropriate format for your congregation to do this?

2. What type of recognition is given to a church worker who leaves the congregation? Why would it be fitting to have a public recognition for a departing worker? Should length of service determine the type of recognition? Should congregational views towards a worker be taken into consideration when planning recognition?

3. What does the congregation offer the church worker's family in case of death of the worker? In case of disability? In case divorce? Are there different provisions for each circumstance? Should there be?

4. Is there a clear Reduction in Force policy in place? If so, how often is it reviewed? Does the policy clearly state acceptable reasons for a Reduction in Force?

5. Is there a clear policy in place as to procedures during a worker's disability that prevents him/her from working? If so, how are safeguards in place to protect the worker's pre-disability income level? What message is sent to the worker when the congregation reduces a worker's salary when disabled? What message is sent to the worker when the congregation maintains the worker's pre-disability salary?

6. What procedures are in place in the congregation to resolve differences between workers and members in order to prevent workers being asked to leave or congregation members transferring membership?

7. What response will the congregation make to a worker who:

    a. Retires?

    b. Is removed from office?

    c. Accepts a Call?

    d. Is disabled for a short term?

    e. Is disabled for a long term?

    f. Dies in office?

8. Are these responses written and followed impartially?

What do you think?

Pastor Gerade was the constant topic of discussion at member's homes. He was constantly criticized for his long, irrelevant sermons, lack of attendance at meetings and faux pas.

Recently he was criticized for a 40 minute sermon, not attending the Sunday school teacher's meeting and for burying a member under the wrong name. The congregation was upset.

Phone calls to the District office were politely answered with the answer, "We can't fire Pastors." Some congregation members transferred, some stopped going to church and some members defended him as the best Pastor the congregation ever had. He recently angered the church council members by reaching out to the African-Immigrant community and inviting them to worship. He recently asked two of the new members to serve on the Evangelism Committee to replace faithful members who had transferred.

The last straw for the Council came when they received the latest copier bill. Pastor had duplicated 3,000 flyers for a right-to life rally to be held in the neighboring city. He paid the church for the paper and toner, but not for the copier overage charge. The Council was determined that he should leave.

Again, the District officials were asked to either fire or move him. The District official insisted he could not do that to a Called worker. At the budget meeting the Voter's unveiled their strategy to force Pastor's decision. They informed him that he was Called to be their Pastor, but they set the salary. So effective with the next Budget year, his salary would be $100 a year with no benefits. He would get paid at his old salary for two more months. He was welcome to seek a Call.

1. What would prevent a scenario like this from happening in your congregation?

2. Is there anything in Pastor Gerade's performance that would warrant his removal? Is there anything in the church council's performance that should be addressed?

3. How and when could the Ethical Guidelines be applied in this scenario?

VI. RELATING TO CONGREGATIONS, DISTRICT, AND SYNOD

1. How often does the congregation pray for the leaders of Synod, District and other congregations in corporate church services? Do the Sunday school children pray for the leaders of Synod, District and other congregations during their opening? Do the school children pray for the leaders of Synod, District and other congregations during Chapel services? What message is sent to the congregation and its children when prayers for leaders are included and regular?

2. What avenues for dissent are available for congregation members when they disagree with local, District or Synod leaders? What checks are in place if the Pastor publicly disagrees with District or Synodical leaders and threatens to break the Eighth Commandment?

3. What cooperative efforts among neighboring congregations are being pursued to offer Kingdom growth opportunities? What would be some hindrances to cooperative efforts? How can these hindrances be overcome? Should they? What would be some advantages to cooperative efforts among local congregations?

4. If a neighboring congregation experiences success, do you celebrate it in your congregation? What can be a negative consequence of celebrating neighboring congregation's successes? How would the celebration of local successes foster a climate of cooperation among congregations?

5. What percentage of the local finances is given to District? Does this percentage of giving offer an example to the members or does it promote the idea of keeping more personal finances for personal use?

6. How would your congregation respond to the argument that the congregation should reduce its percentage giving to District due to a shortfall in local income? Some would argue that the District squanders money, doesn't provide relevant services and has too much administration. How would you respond to this argument?

7. What is your congregation's policy about calling workers from neighboring congregations? How far away must a worker be before your congregation would consider calling him/her?

8. When facing a vacancy in the school, congregations will often consider calling married workers. What would be the impact on the school from which a married couple leaves? Why should caution be exercised when calling married church workers?

9. Would your congregation accept transfers from a sister congregation without inquiring as to the reason? Would there be a situation where your congregation should refuse to accept a member from a sister congregation? If so, would you?

10. How seriously does your congregation cooperate with neighboring congregations in respect to church discipline? Would your congregation welcome to the Altar sister congregation members who have been ex-communicated? Is your Pastor informed of sister congregation members who have been placed under church discipline? If so, how is this information shared?

11. Is your congregation aware of the resources available through the Michigan District? Does your Pastor know which Congregation Ministry Facilitator is assigned to your congregation? Does your school board take advantage of the services of the Michigan District's Superintendent of Education? When was the last time your congregation worked through a Strategic Plan?

What do you think?

Pastor Ren and Principal Stimpy make a great team. They are visionary, creative, faithful and creative. They work so well together that one would have a hard time telling where one stops and the other starts. They have teamed up to inspire, inform and lead the congregation in worship, study and projects. They have great energy together and laugh at each other's humor. They are exceptional workers individually, but are outstanding when working together. The congregation has experienced a growth in membership, a gain of confidence, and a new vision due to the teamwork evidenced. The Pastor and Principal of a congregation across the state have each left and the congregation is looking for a Pastor and Principal. A member's relative attends church at Pastor Ren's congregation and has spoken highly of her Pastor. Soon inquiries were made and both Pastor Ren and Principal Stimpy were placed on the Call list.

1. What would be the harm in Calling both Pastor and Principal away from their current assignment? What would be the advantages?

2. When is it ethical to call multiple workers from one congregation?

Now that you have studied the Ethical Conduct for Congregations document, what difference will it make in your ministry?

1. What will you stop doing?

2. What will you start doing?

3. What will you continue doing?

Special Note About "**What do you think?**" Examples.

These scenarios are fictitious, except for Section II Part H. Any similarity to any person, living or dead, is purely coincidental, accidental, and not intentional.

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